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The Intercultural Ancients: A Mock Exhibit Exploring the Cross-Cultural Influences in the Representation of Women in Ancient South Asian and Ancient Mediterranean Art

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University
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December 2010

Honors Capstone Project in Art History

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Abstract:

This project is a mock-exhibit which explores the existence the cross-cultural diffusion between the early people of the Mediterranean (from the Balkan Peninsula to the Syrian coast) and South Asia (from Afghanistan to Bhutan). The components of the project are an exhibition catalog and 3D exhibition design.

Although there is substantial evidence of ancient contacts between the Aegean (Balkan Peninsula, Crete, Cyclades) and the Near East (Syria, South Turkey, Eastern Iraq, Western Iran) and South Asia and the Near East, there is little scholarship in the evidence-scarce topic of communication between the Aegean and South Asia. This exhibit broaches this subject by providing the visitor with examples of art from both areas which suggest a possibility for diffusion.

The artworks for this exhibition are all female figurines due to their availability and popularity in both areas being considered. There are eleven female figurines, six Mediterranean and five South Asian, split into five periods, ranging from the Neolithic Era (Pre-4000 BCE) to the Classical/Kushan Periods (200 CE). By dividing the exhibit into five time periods, the trends of communication and resulting effect on the stylistic conventions in art are more easily discernable. The exhibit begins with the Neolithic Era because it encompasses some of the earliest figurines produced in the regions and ends in 200 CE when communication between the two regions can be archaeologically proven.

The catalog supports the artworks in the exhibit with sections on the foreign contact of each region that could have supported stylistic diffusion the gender constructions which could have influenced the female image, historical summaries of each period, and analyses of how the figures could have been influenced by the other's stylistic conventions.

The exhibition design lays out visually how the topic would be presented to the public. It takes into account the atmosphere, pattern of movement, and accessibility to create an optimal experience for visitors of the exhibition.

The subject was explored based on research on extant archaeological evidence, the more established stylistic diffusion of each region with the Near East, and visual analysis. Although definitive conclusions could not be made without undeniable archaeological evidence, the exhibit shows a gradual movement from each region through the Near East and into one another beginning as early as the Neolithic Era.

There were two prevalent trends that become clear throughout the study of the works of art over the full period of time. Whether embraced or eschewed, there was consistently some foreign influence in every work of art. However, at the same time, these elements of foreign influence were mixed with indigenous artistic styles.

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I should first thank my parents for putting up with me since May despite the crushing revelation that I would not be officially graduating on time. They consistently, and only some times begrudgingly, do everything in their power to help me finish my work, even if it means taking care of my pet mice (to whom an acknowledgement by way of apology due to the neglect I have shown them the past month) and rushing to the post office to mail out a draft in time to reach Syracuse the next day (not to mention the minor factors of providing me with a home and financial support).

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Advice to Future Honors Students

The best advice I could give to future honors students is to make sure you do the exact opposite of everything I did. Seriously, everything. As this advice requires knowing what I did and the explanation of everything I did wrong would be quite long,, I think it is better to give a list of things you really should do if you want to avoid finishing your capstone a full semester (not even a summer) after your initial submission date. That's right, I took two extensions. The only upside of this, is that I have really valuable advice that should be taken seriously by you.

Advice 1: Remember those annoying notecards you had to fill out in middle school? There were the small ones for the bibliographical information and the large ones which were marked with a letter corresponding to a source and a topic for which the notes on the card would pertain. When's the last time you did something like that? Full out, the whole writing process? There is a good chance that you do not even take notes anymore, just read a couple articles and write something. Well the capstone requires more than just a few articles and, although I do concede that I have poor memory, it is painfully difficult to try and remember a fact you read three months ago, least of all where it came from and its citation information. So take notes, even if they are not on index cards, make outlines, do the whole, arduous thing. Believe me, the organization will be helpful in the end.

Advice 2: Know how you work best. If you, like me, work best on adrenaline hour before a deadline, then find a way to get your deadlines. If this involves bribing your advisor to act angry at you are late, do it. If caffeine

induced anxiety attacks are not your style, figure out what is. Whatever conditions you need to force you do your best work, make those conditions happen.

Advice 3: This is connected to Advice 2, admit your flaws and work with them. Even if this requires admitting that you are the worst procrastinator in the world or that you cannot concentrate on reading anything scholarly for more than five minutes, embrace it. While it is always good to try and work on your shortcomings, you need to be realistic too. Your study habits are most likely not going to change from the last 3+ years and an important and large project like the Capstone is not the time to take the risk that they will.

Advice 4: Know where you're going. If you are a little lost or not entirely sure exactly where to begin, figure it out with some general research before you go too in depth. Otherwise, you may end up with say, a pile of articles for a time period a thousand years after your desired time range.

Advice 5: Get your stuff to your reader early! No your reader does not grade you. No your reader does not set your deadlines. But your reader has the ability to completely quash your capstone by not accepting it. So get your drafts to your reader. This way, if your reader has a lot of changes for you, you have time to make them, and if your reader really hates it, you can switch readers (at least there's some vestige of control and options).

Advice 6: I will not tell you to give up on your thesis if you hate it, but nor will I tell you to keep going even if you hate it. I hated my thesis for months but I was determined to finish it. Try to find a way to transform your thesis into something you like, even if it involves a fair amount of change. Ultimately you

will probably spend as much time staring at the computer and hating your thesis as you would actively making changes. If you cannot find a way to return it to a labor of love, then seriously consider if continuing with your thesis is right for you.

Those are only a few gems of wisdom from my completely insane capstone experience and I hope you do find them helpful. In the end remember this is an undergraduate thesis and not finishing it is not the end of the world. If you feel like your capstone is completely ruining your life, take a break. The capstone might be tough and require a lot of hard work but it should never take over your life, particularly if it is a coup resulting in misery. If you do end up in the same position as me, with the possibility of needing the summer and maybe even fall extensions, do not beat yourself up too much. Things happen. At that point there is nothing else to do but accept it and figure out your options. So good luck and remember, the world does not end with the capstone.

Introduction

The aim of this exhibit is to look at two concurrent and contrasting cultures of the ancient world, the Mediterranean and South Asia, and what, if any, communication and thus diffusion may have occurred. The theory of diffusion is regarded with much caution and skepticism by many scholars. None want to go too far but most admit that some diffusion clearly took place.¹ This exhibit is based on the premise that diffusion did occur in early civilizations and explores the possibility that it may have existed in regions as distant as the Mediterranean and South Asia.

The use of these two regions for this exhibit stems from two conventional beliefs in contemporary society - that the cultures of South Asia and the West are fundamentally different and that the earliest human communities were secluded in villages and unable to travel long distances as we do today. However continued scholarship in the areas of trade and intercultural contacts in the ancient world finds increasing evidence that our ancestors travelled the world and brought with various cultures, languages, and religions. This opens the possibility that, although they appear drastically different today, South Asian and Western culture are both the result of thousands of years of cultural exchange.

For this exhibit, the geographical area referred to as the Mediterranean ranges from the Greek mainland to the east coast of the Mediterranean, including the Balkan Peninsula, Cycladic Islands, Crete, Western Anatolia (Modern-day

¹ Edward M. Schortman. "Interregional Interaction in Prehistory: The Need for a New Perspective." *American Antiquity* 54.1 (1989): 52.

Turkey), and Cyprus. South Asia in this exhibit is defined by Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. The distances between these two regions are vast and it seems unlikely that either civilization would make the dangerous journey to trade with the other. Both civilizations do, however, have ties with the present-day Middle East, particularly in earlier millennia with Mesopotamia. While the majority South Asians and Mediterranean people probably did not directly swap ideas until Alexander's invasion in 324 BCE, it is not impossible to imagine that some ideas from both cultures may have swept through the Middle East and into one another's cultures.

All the objects that have been used in this exhibit are of female figures. The choice to do so was twofold. Female figures are prolific in the ancient world and present in many areas, time periods, and materials. Furthermore, by using the same subject of representation, it becomes easier to identify the similarities and differences in each culture's artistic style.

The exhibit is broken up into five time periods, from Neolithic Era (Pre-4000 BCE) to circa 200 CE, the point at which contact between South Asia and the Aegean can definitively be proven. Two objects, one Mediterranean and one South Asian, are considered for each period. By dividing the exhibit like this, the changes in time in communication and resulting effect on the art of each region is more easily detected. However it is important when looking at art to understand the contexts in which an object was made. Thus each section begins with a brief

overview of the historical situation of each area during that time period.² This is followed by a description of each object and then their comparative analysis.

Before moving into individual periods, however, there is a section on the extant trade in the two areas and where signs of diffusion occur as well as a small note on the role of women in these societies. The entire catalogue then concludes with a summary.

No matter what the conclusions, there can never be a definite answer as to how much the Mediterranean people and South Asian people really knew and interacted with one another. Unless the Cretan script of Linear A or Indic script were translated and gave explicit testimony of their interactions, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to ever make definitive conclusions. However this exhibit at least makes an attempt to look at these works of art and the people who made them in a new light and see if perhaps something was missed which was never considered possible before.

² N.B. All historical facts, unless otherwise cited, are written with reference to *A Brief History of Ancient Greece: Politics, Society, and Culture* Second Edition editor S. Pomeroy et alia for the Mediterranean and *A History of India* by Burton Stein for South Asia.

Trade and Communication

When people imagine cities and civilizations of the past, they imagine primitive and isolated communities with simplistic lifestyles and little interaction, if even knowledge, of the societies outside of their own. In the past few decades, research has shattered this view of the ancient world, concluding that societies “rarely, if ever, are isolated from each other”.³ Indeed as more progress is made in the study of ancient civilizations, more evidence surfaces proving the existence of a vast and complicated network of interaction among ancient societies. As the complexity of society grows, the need for a larger supply of goods forces communities to look to peripheral sources,⁴ thus forming a nexus of trade which inevitably exchanges not only goods, but ideas as well.

The importance of trade to the relationship between ancient societies cannot be exaggerated. Trade requires not only the existence of goods to exchange, but also a congenial relationship between communities that allows exchange to foster and grow. As contemporary society has proven, unfriendly diplomatic relationships reflects negatively on the productivity of trade between two nations. Trade also requires communication, whether between the merchants or the societal leaders or anyone else involved in the process. Languages will merge for successful communication, gifts will be given to develop relationships, ceremonies and traditions will be shared in friendship, and of course, commodities of all types will be transferred. Goods, particularly those in finished

³ Schortman 52.

⁴ Ibid., 60.

form, can transfer both symbolic meanings and typical uses.⁵ Therefore the entire process of trade, from the act of exchanging to the movement of the goods themselves, contributes to the spread of concepts from religion to clothing.

In Eurasia, documented trade between communities began as early as the Neolithic Age. Tosi and Lamber-Karlovsky describe a picture of the first half of the fourth millennium BCE in which a traveler “moving from the Mediterranean Levant to either of the eastern extremes of the Chalcolithic world along the Zervashan or the Indus would have passed through hundreds of towns and thousands of villages”.⁶ The continued flourishing of these communities and proportional expansion of trade resulted thousands of years later in civilizations where almost all aspects of culture had been influenced in some way by external concepts.

The early interactions in Eurasia were highly dependent on the Mesopotamian civilization, which had the advantage of not only being one of the oldest civilizations, but also centrally located. Around 2300 BCE, the cities and towns in the Mesopotamian region solidified to form the first empire under the rule of the Akkadian king, Sargon, establishing a formidable political power which, at the height of its power, encompassed an area from all of Mesopotamia, parts of Western Syria, Anatolia, Iran, the Caucasus, and Arabia – an area stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf (Map 1). Mesopotamia, from the mouth of the Tigris, lies some 1,800 miles west of the Harappan

⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁶ Joan Aruz, Ronald Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.). *Art of the First Cities : The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus*. New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art ; Yale University Press, 2003. 348

Civilization⁷ and approximately 800 miles from the Greek mainland (Map 2). Despite these distances, the Mesopotamian civilization was possibly the most influential on the Aegean and South Asian civilizations.

The Ancient Aegean Civilization is unique in that despite being referenced overall as a single cultural unit, the included areas (Mainland Greece, Crete, the Cycladic Islands, and in later years Cyprus) exist on separate land entities which are divided by the Mediterranean Sea. Despite this, it did not take long for the people of these areas to interact (Map 3 Major Aegean Sites). Documented discoveries of Melian obsidian in Thessaly from the Neolithic Age establish an early contact between the Greek mainland and Cycladic Islands.⁸ Neolithic figures of women found throughout the Aegean bear marked similarities. The subsequent Early Bronze Age art, such as the Cycladic idols, can be found throughout the Aegean area, both as imports and local imitations. These contacts strengthened as the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations formed in the early second millennium BCE, eventually allowing the area to be considered generally as a single culture.

Having already established connections with neighboring Aegean societies, in the third millennium BCE the Aegean people were able venture out farther. Excavations show that the Early Bronze Age also saw contact of the Greek mainland, Cycladic Islands, and Minoan Crete with Western Anatolia and Syria.⁹ An analysis of Early Bronze Age objects of copper found on the island of

⁷ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York,N.Y.) 4.

⁸ Colin Renfrew. "The Development and Chronology of the Early Cycladic Figurines." *American Journal of Archaeology* 73.1 (1969): 30.

⁹ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York,N.Y.) 8.

Syros found that both the copper and the alloy used originated from Troy in Anatolia. Jewelry similar in style and in date made from semiprecious stone and precious metals can be found in geographical area ranging from south-central Greece all the way to Ur in Mesopotamia (Map 4).¹⁰ Whether Greeks themselves travelled to trade in Mesopotamia is unknown and highly unlikely, but the jewelry shows that by Early Bronze Age a network of trade between Mesopotamia and Greece both existed and was established enough to allow for a transmission of ideas in the form of bead design (Map 5).

The second millennium BCE witnessed an intensification and exponential increase of trade between the Aegean and Mesopotamia. The arrival of Cypriot pottery in the earlier centuries heralded the beginning of a Cyprus' strong involvement in maritime trade.¹¹ Cyprus is particularly important in the diffusion of ideas due to its location between the Aegean and the Levant. Precious metals again form the basis of the network of trade between Mesopotamia and the Aegean. In the 18th century, Mesopotamian tin, which itself was imported from further east, reached all the way to Crete from a network extending from Mari to Ugarit to Cyprus. In return, archives from Mari have several references to Copper obtained from Cyprus.¹²

The Late Bronze Age, the 15th to 12th centuries BCE, encompassed the zenith of Mediterranean trade. The extent of these trade relationships is

¹⁰ Ibid., 255.

¹¹ Moshe Kochavi. *"Some Connections Between the Aegean and the Levant in the Second Millennium BC: A View From the East"*. *Greece Between East and West, 10th-8th centuries BC : Papers of the Meeting at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, March 15-16th, 1990*, Eds. Günter Kopcke and Isabelle Tokumaru. Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Mainz, Rhine: Verlag Philipp von Zabern. 1992. 9.

¹² Ibid.

exemplified by the Assyrian “colonial imperialism” in Anatolia. The Assyrians established merchant centers, called the Karum Kanish, in Anatolian cities through which orders and merchandise could be passed back and forth from Assur. The Karum Kanish was a separate section of the Anatolian cities inhabited only by the Assyrian merchants. Trade was conducted on behalf of both the state and private clients by these merchants. A general store, called the Bit Karum, was also situated in the Karum Kanish to store imported goods and the merchandise marked for export back to Assyria.¹³ With the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization and destruction of the Hittite Empire at the end of the second millennium BCE, the network of trade was disrupted, evidenced most startlingly by the disappearance of all Mycenaean pottery importation into the Levant. The climate for trade no longer existed and the intricate relationships formed during rest of the millennium withered.¹⁴

At the end of the second millennium BCE, a society referred to as the Phoenicians appeared in the Levant and by 1000 BCE, they had become the foremost sea power in the Mediterranean.¹⁵ The Greeks considered the Phoenicians to be all the inhabitants of the Levant, including those who spoke Aramaic and not the Phoenician language of Canaanite, thereby including in the Greek definition of Phoenicia the North Syrian states.¹⁶ Homer describes the

¹³ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Wolfgang Röllig. *"Asia Minor as a Bridge Between East and West: The Role of the Phoenicians and Aramaeans in the Transfer of Culture". Greece Between East and West, 10th-8th centuries BC : Papers of the Meeting at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, March 15-16th, 1990*, Eds. Günter Kopcke and Isabelle Tokumaru. Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Mainz, Rhine: Verlag Philipp von Zabern. 1992. 93.

Phoenicians as merchants who sailed and traded on the Mediterranean Sea, distributing not only their own goods but acting as the middlemen as well.¹⁷

With the practices of the Phoenicians, trade relations resumed between the Aegean and the Near East. By the 9th century BCE, a plethora of Greek pottery reappears in the Near East while conversely, Near Eastern materials such as ivory and techniques such as gold granulation show up in the Aegean.¹⁸ According to archaeological records, by the 8th century BCE the Phoenicians were integrated in the Greek sanctuaries and settlements and even had their alphabetic system adopted by the Greeks.¹⁹ A large majority of Near Eastern products were found in Greek sanctuaries, sacred places usually dedicated to a single deity. It appears that rulers of foreign cities took part in a sort of 'gift exchange' directly with the gods of the sanctuaries through which precious objects were gifted in exchange for fortune in commerce. It is possible that after the fall of the Mycenaean civilization, the Greeks transferred the rights of the royalty, such as perfumed garments, religious rites, and the practice of gift exchange, to the gods, a practice then mimicked by foreign rulers.²⁰ Regardless of the reason, Near Eastern goods were concentrated in the sanctuaries and their placement their greatly affected the resulting Near Eastern influences which appeared in Greece.

¹⁷ Ibid., 95.

¹⁸ Chester G. Starr. *"History and Archaeology in the Early First Millennium BC". Greece Between East and West, 10th-8th centuries BC : Papers of the Meeting at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, March 15-16th, 1990*, Eds. Günter Kopcke and Isabelle Tokumaru. Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Mainz, Rhine: Verlag Philipp von Zabern. 1992. 1. Print. 3.

¹⁹ Sarah Morris. *"Introduction: Greece Beyond East and West: Perspectives and Prospects". Greece Between East and West, 10th-8th centuries BC : Papers of the Meeting at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, March 15-16th, 1990*, Eds. Günter Kopcke and Isabelle Tokumaru. Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. Mainz, Rhine: Verlag Philipp von Zabern. 1992. xvii.

²⁰ Ibid., xvi.

The area of the Indus Valley, Afghanistan, and East Iran are projected to have formed an economic interaction zone as early as the 6th or 5th millennia BCE (Map 6). During Mesopotamia's Early Dynastic Period, ca. 2900 to 2300 BCE, an area named Meluhha appeared in Mesopotamian texts²¹ as part of a maritime trade network between itself and sites called Magan, Dilmun, and Akkad.²² Based on these texts, scholars generally agree that Meluhha can be placed within the Indus Civilization, Magan in either Oman or South Eastern Iran, and Dilmun as the Island of Bahrain including the opposite coast of Arabia.²³ Magan appears as the origin point for the goods which are then passed to Meluhha then Dilmun and on into Mesopotamia.

The Dilmun Trade with Mesopotamia, however, included goods which were not found in any of these three sites²⁴ and products linked to these sites were found in other areas suggesting that the Dilmun trade was only part of a large trade system which moved between Eastern Iran, Seistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia.²⁵ The presence of African millets in Asia makes it possible that the full route spanned from Africa through Arabia and on to South Asia.²⁶ This trade system, in particular the sea trade, flourished especially under the rule of Sargon in the second half of the third millennium BCE.²⁷ Davaras suggests that this rich trade with the Indus in particular may have resulted in the abundance of precious

²¹ Gregory L. Possehl. *The Indus Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective*. Ed. Gregory L. Possehl. New York: Altamira Press, 2002. 218.

²² Ibid., 217.

²³ Ibid., 219.

²⁴ Ibid., 220.

²⁵ Ibid., 229.

²⁶ Ibid., 218.

²⁷ Kostas Davaras. *Parallels and Affinities Between Crete and India in the Bronze Age :Some Speculations*. Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 2003. 21.

stones and metals which were found in the Royal Cemetery at Ur from 2500 BCE.²⁸ Although no texts describe products moving directly from Mesopotamia to Meluhha,²⁹ artifacts from the Indus have been found in Mesopotamia and vice versa.³⁰

Besides sea trade, the Indus appears to have been involved with trade on land with an area referred to by modern scholars as the Middle Asia Interaction Sphere (Map 7). This is a region between the Indus and the Mediterranean encompassing the land from Bactria and Central Asia to the Arabian Gulf.³¹ It is possible that this is the on land trade route which formed the Northern part of the Dilmun trade system. The Middle Asia Interaction Sphere also includes an area called Turan believed to be the southern portion of modern day Turkmenistan. By the Mature Harappan Phase, the Indus people established a city called Shortunghai, as far north as the Amu Darya River.³²

Around the decline of the Indus Civilization in the early second millennium BCE, an area encompassing parts of Northern Afghanistan, referred to by modern scholars as the Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex (henceforth referred to as BMAC), begins to emerge (Map 8).³³ Prior to this, there was no evidence of the Bactrians or Central Asians in the Indus area, despite there being evidence of the Indus in their land.³⁴ It is possible that the BMAC people

²⁸ Ibid., 25.

²⁹ Possehl 220.

³⁰ Ibid., 217.

³¹ Ibid., 215.

³² Ibid., 229.

³³ Ibid., 229.

³⁴ Ibid., 235.

sensed the decline in the Indus civilization and moved in to take advantage of it.³⁵ Whatever the reason the BMAC people might have had for moving, the appearance of their artifacts in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa around 2000 BCE indicates that they successfully penetrated into the subcontinent.³⁶

While the trade relations of the Indus and Aegean with the Near East are well documented, there is no substantial proof of trade between the Aegean and the Indus Valley. It is possible that by the time the Aegean became highly involved in trade with the Middle East, the Indus had already started in its period of decline. Although concrete proof has yet to be found, there are products and ideas in the Aegean and the Indus Valley that allow for conjecture as to what interaction they may have had.

Though scientific analysis, traded goods such as metals and precious stones can be examined to determine an approximate origin of the raw material. This has led to the discovery that of the origin of Minoan lapis lazuli is in Badakshan in Northeast Afghanistan, not far from the Indian trade center of Shortugai (Map 6). A metal of interest is tin, which the Aegeans traded with the Mesopotamians in the second half of the second millennium BCE. As mentioned earlier, the Mesopotamians themselves imported the tin from another, unknown source.³⁷ In the 3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE, the only known source of tin was cited as to be found east of Mesopotamia.³⁸ It is possible tin was one of the products originating in Meluhha in the Dilmun trade and which, despite the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 229.

³⁷ Kochavi 10.

³⁸ Davaras 4.

decline in the Indus Valley Civilization, might have continued as line of trade with the Near East by either the Indus merchants themselves or the people from BMAC.

In the Indus, there are very few products which seem to originate from the west, even from Mesopotamia. Possehl proposes that the absence of Mesopotamian presence in the Indus may be due to the importation of 'invisible' goods, such as grain, clothes, leather, and fish, which do not leave behind tangible archaeological remains.³⁹ There are several items, however, which appear to have comparable counterparts in Mesopotamia. As will be examined later, several terracotta figurines can be compared to Near Eastern objects. A terracotta figurine from Lothal of a male with a square-cut beard is even postulated to be of a Mesopotamian.⁴⁰

Like the Near East, there are also some Indus remains which resemble goods from the Aegean. Copper adzes found at Mohenjo-Daro and Sibri from around 2000 BCE are comparable to examples from Hissar, BMAC, Troy, and Crete.⁴¹ Although it is wholly possible that the design for these adzes originated in the Near East and moved east and west to both civilizations, the presence of such items shows at least the transmission of ideas across the region.

Etched Carnelian beads are another example of a design found throughout the area from the Aegean to the Indus. In the case of the beads, however, the discovery in the Indus of workshops with beads in various stages of completion

³⁹ Possehl 229.

⁴⁰ Possehl 227.

⁴¹ Possehl 227.

proves that the beads originated in the Indus Valley area.⁴² Furthermore, the beads disappear at the same time as the transformation of the Indus Valley and do not reappear until the middle of the first millennium BCE. These beads are found at the Royal Graves at Ur, Kish, the Akkadian Tell Asmar, the Early Dynastic Tell Abu Salabikh, and the Late Dynastic/Early Akkadian Nippur.⁴³ An etched carnelian bead was found in the Tomb of Aegina in the Aegean, marking the first ever of its kind to be found west of Ur or Kish.⁴⁴ Map 9 depicts some of the places where etched carnelian beads have been found.

An even more interesting product found in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa is the four ring kanoi. The kanoi is a cult vessel used in rituals in classical Greece, Egypt, the Levant, the prehistoric Aegean, and Minoan Crete from the mid-fourth millennium BCE to the early first millennium AD but is rarely found in Mesopotamia.⁴⁵ The kanoi is the only characteristic object of Mediterranean material culture found in the Indus. Possehl proposes that some inhabitants and natives of the Indus learned the rituals of the kernaphoria festival, a festival associated with the harvest with which the kanoi is an integral object, through their trade with the Middle Asian Interaction Sphere and actually used the kanoi to celebrate the holiday.⁴⁶ If this indeed is the reason for the kanoi's presence in the Indus then it represents not only a transmission of a product but also a definite exchange of ideas in the form of religious beliefs.

⁴² Ibid., 223.

⁴³ Ibid., 222.

⁴⁴ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) 8.

⁴⁵ Davaras 107.

⁴⁶ Possehl 228.

The presence of similar motifs spanning the ancient civilizations has led scholars to appropriate these motifs to a style of art, called the Intercultural style. The primary vehicles of these motifs are small portable objects, such as vessels and seals, which are both integral to trade and move easily from hand to hand.⁴⁷ These motifs, the combat snake, humped bulls, Umdugud (lion-headed bird), hut motif, date palms, and simple designs, are all carved on stone. They all appear to originate from different settings but they appear across the Middle Asian Interaction Sphere⁴⁸ and in the case of the zebu in the gulf, Iran, and Mesopotamia.⁴⁹ Map 10 and Map 11 depicts some of these motifs and the locations in which they have been found.

While the motifs of the Intercultural style have been satisfactorily shown the synthesis of cultures between the Near East and the Indus, there are a few lesser substantiated motifs which appear in places from the Aegean to the Indus. Davaras stylistically parallels motifs on seals from Crete and the Indus with images of ships, tree, bull fighting, and even the image of the Proto-Shiva, which he compares with Dionysus. Although his theories cannot be suitably substantiated, they allow for the possibility of an exchange of ideas between the Aegean and Indus cultures. Certainly they demonstrate that further research into their background is necessary.

By outlining the extent of Indus and Aegean trade networks and the instances of cultural exchange that can be demonstrated, it makes the idea that the Greeks and Harappans interacted in the early millennia of human civilization

⁴⁷ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York,N.Y.) 7.

⁴⁸ Possehl 216.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 223.

seem wholly plausible. Products such as the kernoï, etched carnelian beads, and intercultural style seals form a stable base on which a case for diffusion can be made. Female figurines, however, are not as generous as to allow the discovery of near identical female figurines over a wide area. However the lack of evidence does not preclude the possibility that diffusion did affect female figurines.

The majority of the female figurines in this exhibit, in particular the earlier artworks, are diminutive in size and thus could be easily carried around. It is possible that they might not have been attractive to traders. Certainly terracotta is not a valuable material in itself, meaning that the significance of the figurines was limited to its religious or practical use. This, along with the relative salience of similar figurines for all of the artworks in this exhibit in their respective time periods, suggests that the earlier (Period 1-4) figures might have been personal items. If they did have religious significance, they might have been carried around for personal worship. Unless the foreign merchant practiced the same religion or could appropriate the figurine as his own goddess, the female figurines would be of little value to them. However even if female figurines were not actively traded, if they were personal items, merchants would bring them with them in their travels and thus introduce them to foreign environments before bringing them back with them. This would account for the lack of identical finds over a large expanse without discounting the possibility of diffusion.

Even if female figurines were not traded, the diffusion of conventions of female imagery could have travelled through other media. Most notably would be through the even smaller objects of seals. Regardless of the imagery, seals were

valuable due to their practical use. However, as is seen in the seals that have been discovered, the ancient people frequently included images of their deities on their seals. If the female figurines are religious in nature, then it would follow that the image of these divine women would appear on the seals which were subsequently moved throughout Eurasia.



Map 1 Mesopotamia at Height of Akkadian Empire⁵⁰
(Enlarged in Appendix)

⁵⁰ <http://www.evolutionology.org/>. Evolutionology- Education, Mathematics, Science, Philosophy, 12/14/2010 2010



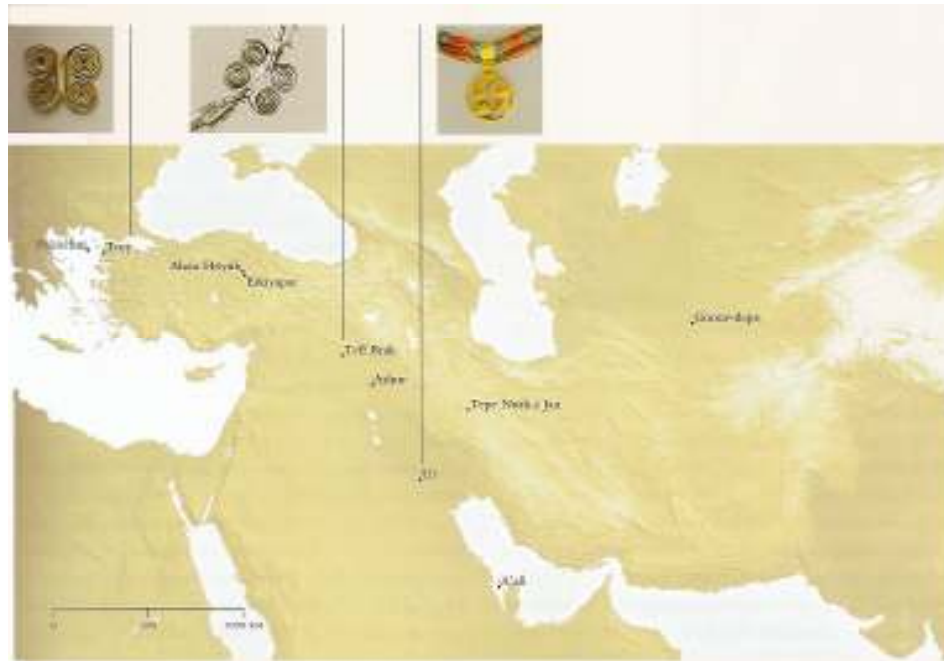
Map 2 General Areas of Aegean, Mesopotamian, and Indus Valley Civilizations
(Enlarged in Appendix)



Map 3 Major Aegean Sites
(Enlarged in Appendix)

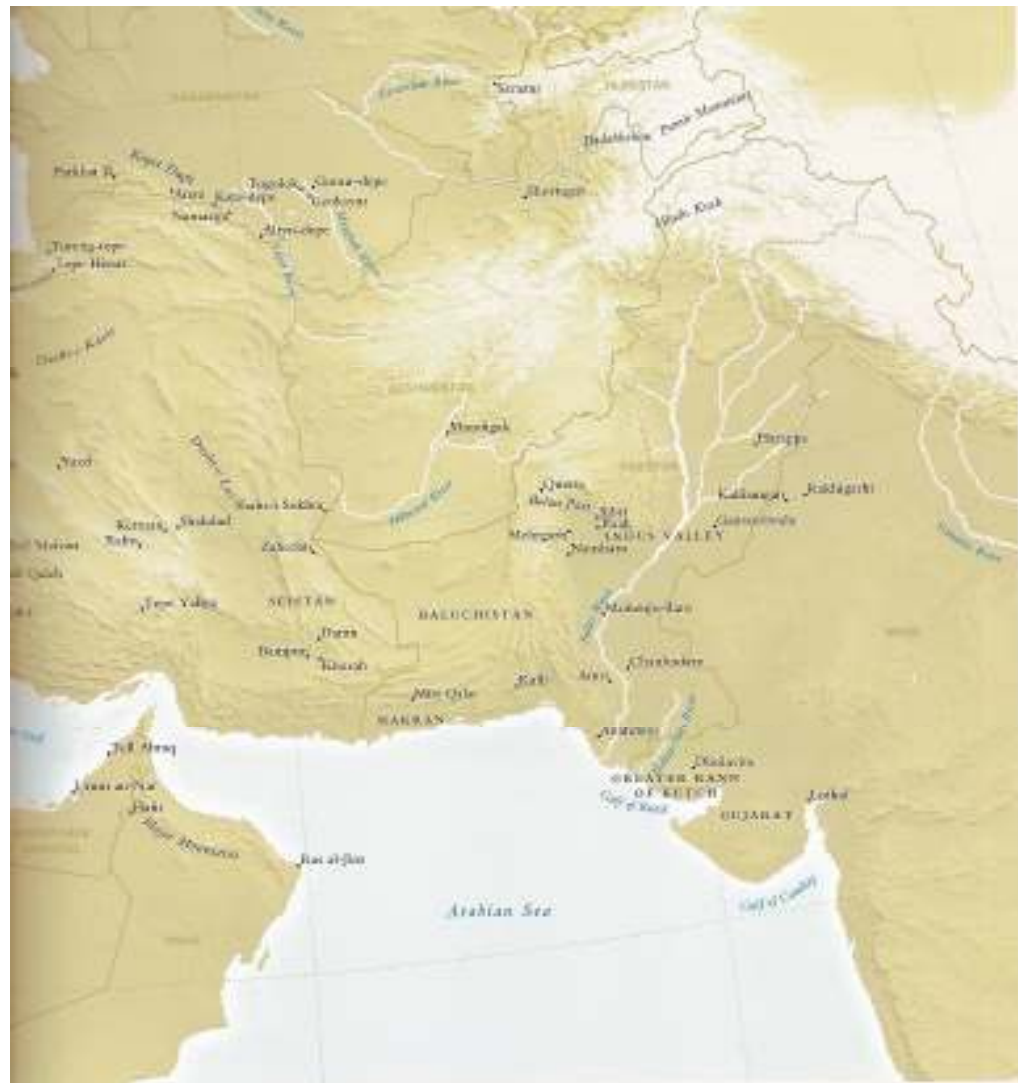


**Map 4 Major Sites in Near East
(Enlarged in Appendix)**



Map 5 Stylistically Similar Beads from Aegean and Near East⁵¹

⁵¹ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) 241.

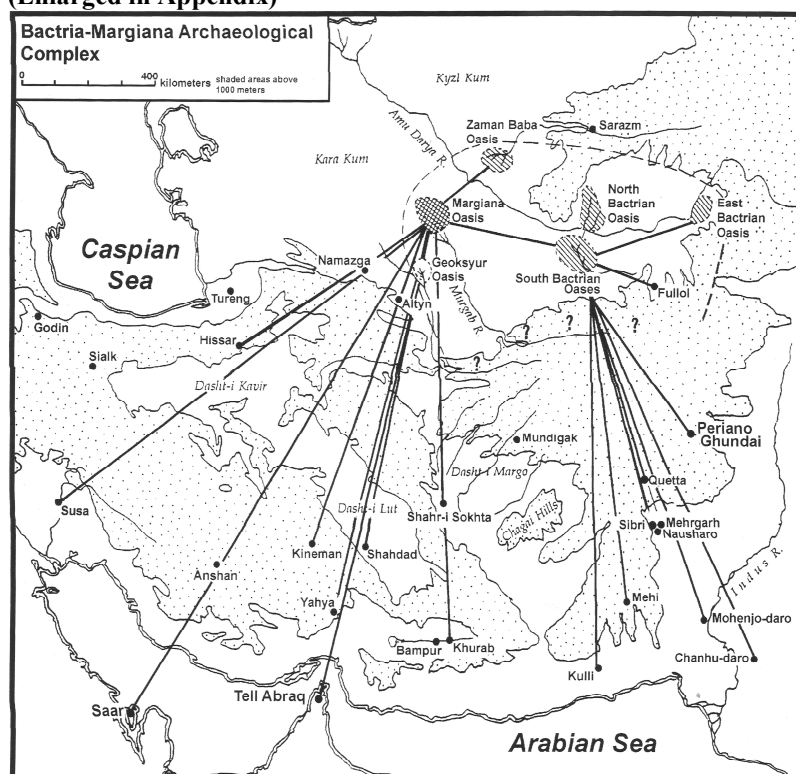


Map 6 Major Sites in Greater Indus⁵²
 (Enlarged in Appendix)

⁵² Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) 235.



Map 7 Middle Asian Interaction Sphere⁵³
(Enlarged in Appendix)



Map 8 Spread of Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex Artifacts⁵⁴
(Enlarged in Appendix)

⁵³ Possehl 215.

⁵⁴ Possehl 234.



Map 9 Locations of Discovered Etched Carnelian Beads⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) 242.



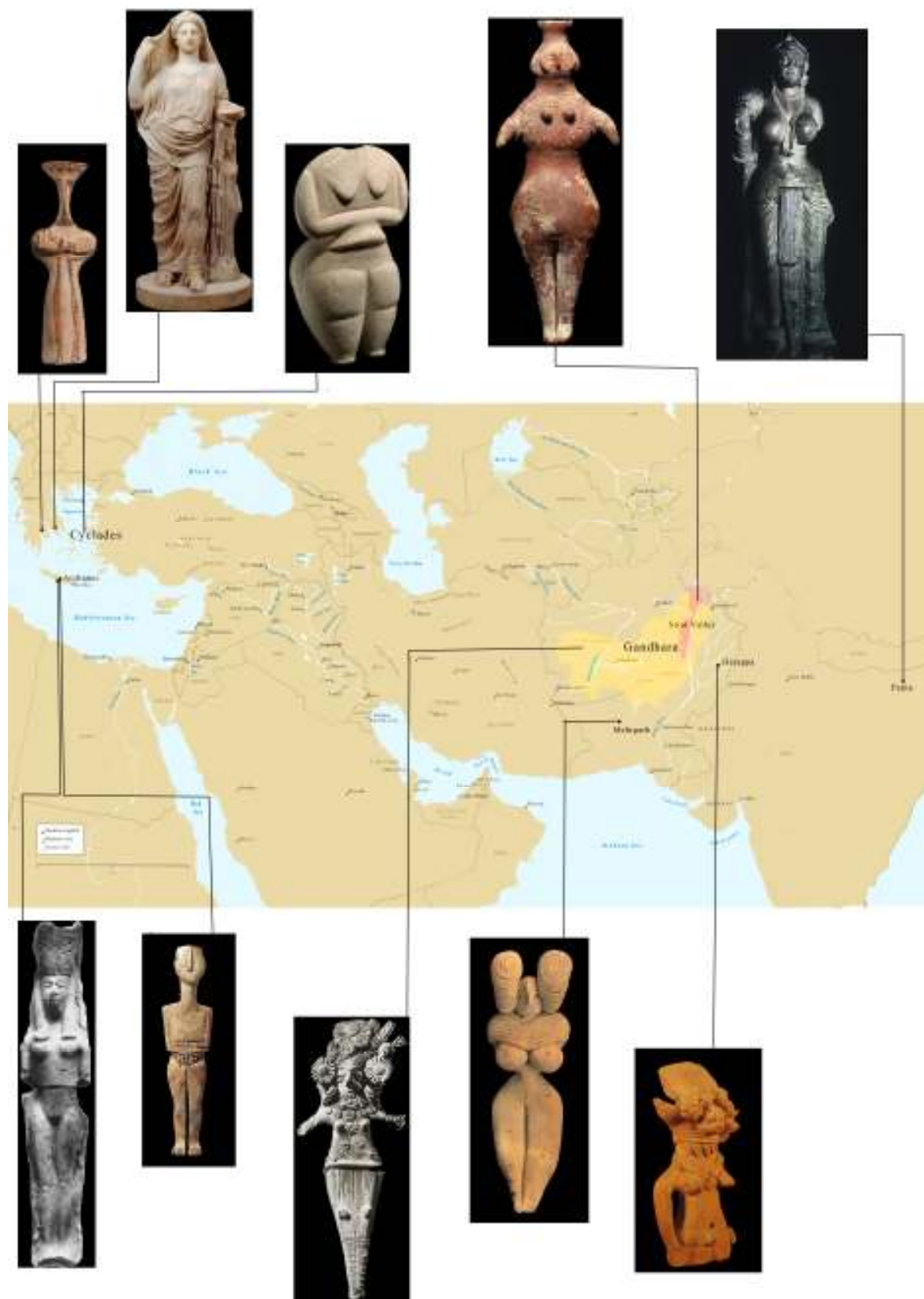
Map 10 Locations of Intercultural Style Motifs⁵⁶
(Enlarged in Appendix)



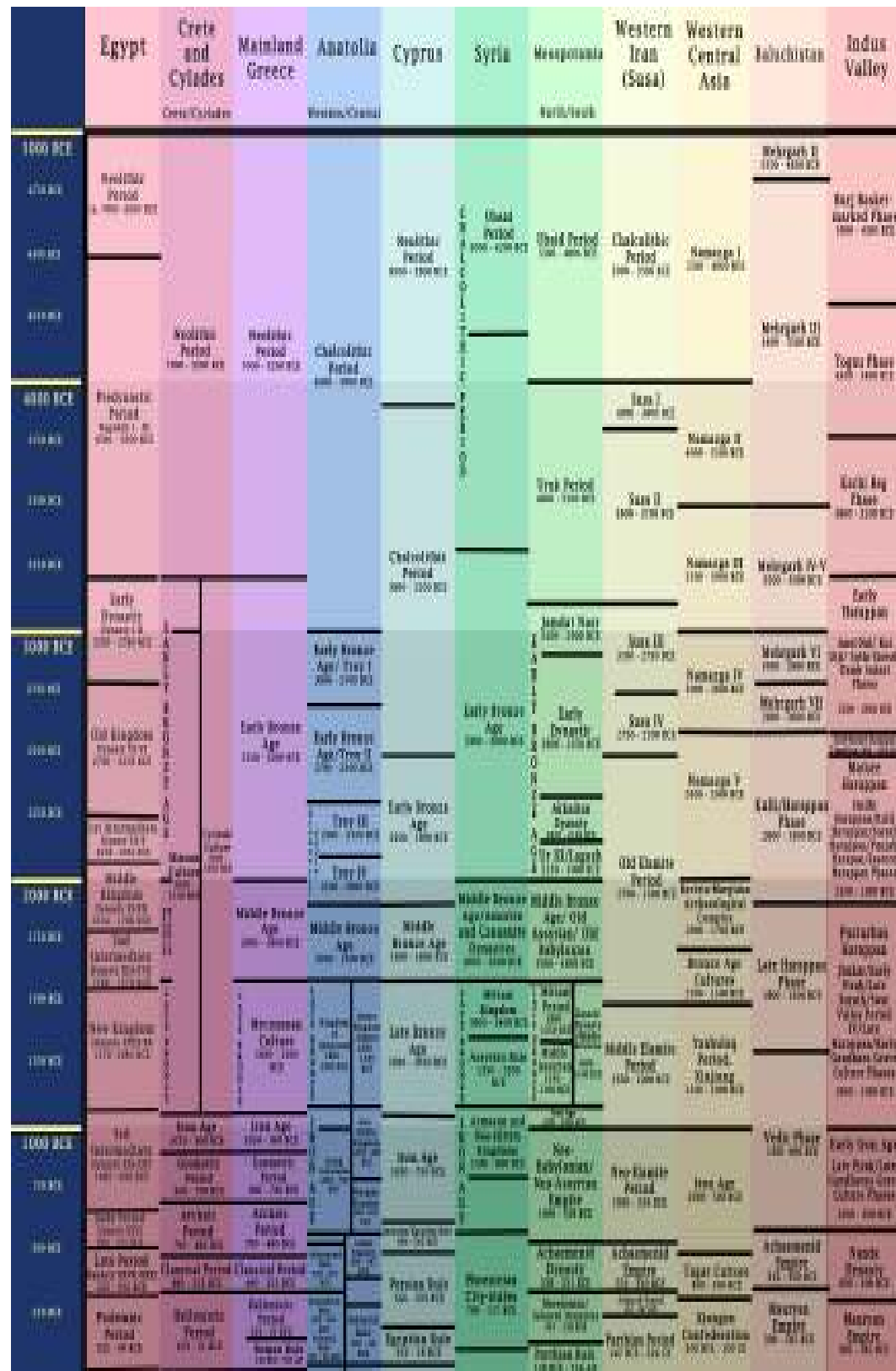
Map 11 Locations of Intercultural Style Motifs⁵⁷
(Enlarged in Appendix)

⁵⁶ Possehl 16.

⁵⁷ Possehl 16.



Map 12 Locations of Artworks in Exhibition



Map 13 Timeline of Pertinent Areas

Role of Women

As the subject matter of all the objects in this exhibit are women, the issue of the role women played and their perception in these societies becomes an important factor in understanding the art. Unfortunately for majority of the time periods, there is scant evidence as to what these roles and perceptions might actually be. The absence of women in surviving texts says almost as much about the status of women as their existence would. Beyond meager textual evidence, there is only artifactual evidence to use to construct a general sense of female status. The conclusions and conjectures that can be made, however, are important to keep in mind when looking at the art these cultures produced.

At the times societies started making these figures, they were in the transition period between hunter-gatherer and agrarian cultures. The general pattern of hunter-gatherer societies shows that women helped supply over seventy percent of the daily food requirements for the community.⁵⁸ Thus the substantial impact that women played in these societies allowed for women to have a higher status. However aspects of farming such as plowing and herding were more suited to the male body type and the contribution of women decreased with the transition of hunter-gatherer to agrarian societies. Hunter-gatherer lifestyles were also less conducive to large families, leading couples to purposely space the birth of children to every three to four years. This restraint was no longer present in agrarian societies, allowing women to have children more frequently and thus spend more time on their care. While of course the care of children was an

⁵⁸ D. Brendan Nagle. *The Ancient World : A Social and Cultural History*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989. 4.

important aspect of life, it did not directly affect the sustainability of the existing community in terms of the provision of food causing the status of women to decline in agrarian societies.⁵⁹ It is likely that this was the pattern present in both South Asia and the Mediterranean in the Neolithic period.

The status of women probably changed as the Indus Valley Civilization began to form. Through looking at the art, figurines of women carrying children are seen in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa but none of men with children,⁶⁰ suggesting that women in the Indus Valley Civilization were associated with childcare. Fortunately, there are also figures of women performing quotidian tasks, shedding further light on their position in Indus society. A figurine of a woman kneading bread and grinding grain suggests that women were engaged in the preparation of food. As this figurine also shows the woman wearing the customary adornments of a hair fan, panniers, and head cone while performing these daily duties suggests that this may have been the typical clothing of Indus women.⁶¹ Even though this figurine shows a woman working at food preparation, this does not necessarily preclude the possibility that men also worked in this area. However based on Nagle's analysis on the effect of an agrarian lifestyle on the roles of the different sexes, it appears likely that men primarily tended to the fields while women may have primarily converted the raw product into food.

As Indus society became more urbanized, it appears that the gender roles shifted once again. Later in the Indus Valley period, figurines of males holding infants have been found. It is possible that, as it occurred with the urbanization in

⁵⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁰ Possehl 181.

⁶¹ Ibid.

the contemporary world, the experience of child birth and task of parenting children could be undertaken by males as well as females.⁶² This sharing of child care most likely disintegrated as the Indus Valley Civilization declined. When civilization appears reformed again, South Asia is in the Vedic period during which much of society follows the conventions outlined by the Vedas. The Hindu epics from this time period, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, depict a system in which women are in charge of domestic duties and are considered subordinate to men.

The Bronze Age Aegean is similarly difficult to interpret based on scarce information. The analysis is made even more difficult in the Mediterranean as, particularly in the earlier ages, the various areas of the Aegean, the Greece mainland, the island of Crete, and the Cycladic Islands, have distinct cultures and political systems. This segregation leads Barbara Olsen to suggest that, based on the artifactual evidence, Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece (both on the mainland and in Crete) have different constructions for gender. In the earlier civilization of Minoan Crete, there is no art depicting women in connection with children.⁶³ Rather, women in Minoan frescos, figurines, and glyptic show females individually, usually as powerful or as prominent figures within the space.⁶⁴ The Mycenaean culture on the mainland and on Crete after the decline of the Minoans portrays a different situation. Mycenaean texts assign the task of caring for

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Barbara A. Olsen. "Women, Children and the Family in the Late Aegean Bronze Age: Differences in Minoan and Mycenaean Constructions of Gender." *World Archaeology* 29.3 (1998): 388.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 382.

children to women.⁶⁵ Even further, texts show that Mycenaean males and females were differentiated both in domestic and palatial contexts. Mycenaeans were split into single-sex workgroups attested by the fact that of the twenty-two occupations found to be held by women in Knossos, only two are shared with men, religious functionaries and slaves, and even in these contexts they were segregated by sex.⁶⁶ Olsen concludes that the Minoans and Mycenaeans may have possessed fundamental differences between either their construction of gender or their conception of gender-based social roles.⁶⁷ If the Minoans did indeed approach gender differently than the Mycenaeans, they nevertheless inherited the conventions of the Mycenaeans and, along with the rest of the Greek world, carried these roles into the Archaic and Classical periods.

One of the most important factors in the status of women, especially related to the works of art in this exhibit, is the role of women as mother goddesses. The label of mother goddess has been applied to any ancient female figurines since possibly the beginning of their study. While this theory cannot be completely discounted, it is more than likely grossly overused. The issue of whether or not a figure represents a mother goddess will be addressed on an individual basis in each section. However, in general, it is not farfetched to imagine the ancient civilizations as having cults dedicated to a mother goddess. The fertility of both the earth and women meant survival to the early humans and thus it is wholly possible that they would create cults, rituals, and a deity to attempt to have the forces of fertility work in their favor. Therefore the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 380.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 383.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 390.

assignment of a female figure as a mother goddess can indeed be valid but conversely, caution and restraint is necessary in making sure this assignment is not given hastily without corroborating facts.

Period 1: 4000 – 3000 BCE

Historical Contexts

South Asia

The human species has occupied the Indian subcontinent for as long as 500,000 years. The Stone Age sites of communities from 400,000 to 150,000 years ago have been discovered from the lowest tip of India up to the Punjab and Himalayan mountain range. The first communities to begin using tools appeared some 15,000 years ago and overlapped with the development of Neolithic communities around 7000 BCE, when hunter-gatherer and nomadic pastoral groups coexisted. Sometime before 4000 BCE, the hunter-gatherers merged into more complex societies of farmers and specialists, advancement necessary in the development of a civilization. The earliest known hunter-gatherer communities settled in Baluchistan, part of present-day Pakistan, where the oldest site was Mehrgarh. Previously, it was thought that the urbanization seen later in South Asia was due to external influences. However the discovery of this period in and the agricultural and hunter-gatherer communities suggests that the Neolithic site evolved into the great cities of the Indus Valley Civilization that formed around 3500 BCE.

The 7th millennium inhabitants at Mehrgarh lived lives consistent to most Neolithic communities. They made multi-roomed buildings from mud brick for living, and storing goods, harvested barley and wheat with the use of stone tools, and interred their dead with gifts of tools, ornaments fashioned from local and imported materials, and sacrificed goats. This ritual of animal sacrifice and

system of burying the dead suggest the existence of a belief system, however, with little available information, it is impossible to determine what this system might be. By 5000 BCE, the buildings grew in size and usage, with separate buildings being used specifically for storage. Changes in crafts suggest the development of specialized artisans working in crafts such as basketwork, wool and cotton textiles, handmade pottery, and copper ware. The mid-4th millennium BCE brought further developments in wheel-thrown pottery and new techniques of mining and smelting. By 3,500 BCE, Mehrgarh had grown in size to a third of a square mile and had become a thriving city. Stamp seals found in Mehrgarh and nearby show that a system of trade had already developed with other communities in the Baluchistan area.

Mediterranean

The Greek mainland has been inhabited by humans since at least 40,000 BCE, during the Middle Paleolithic Age. These humans lived in hunter-gatherer societies, surviving on wild plants and game and using tools of stone, wood, and bone. The beginning of the Neolithic Age around 7000 BCE brought with it agriculture in the form of domesticated plants and animals. As is typical, the switch to agrarian society allowed the Greek inhabitants to settle permanently and form villages. Already at this time the people were sculpting with clay and marble to make animal and human figurines and pottery.

There was no political system in existence in the early Stone Age villages. Rather the villagers worked in a cooperative system with one another. Villages were small enough that most inhabitants would have been related. If a leadership

decision was necessary, it was given to a man who showed natural leadership. This system continued as villages became larger; and when a single leader was necessary, the position was given to he who showed qualities of effective leadership.

Exhibition Objects

South Asian

The Seated Nude with Elaborate Hairdressing from the 4th millennium BCE in Mehrgarh is a prime example of Neolithic art in South Asia. The most obvious attribute of this figurine are the two large buns on either side of her head. The locks of hair, shown by swirling a string of clay, are swept up to frame the figurine's comparatively diminutive head. The figurine's facial features are represented punctuated eyes and a pinched nose. Overwhelming the figurine's neck and upper chest is another huge mass which in this case signifies necklaces. Again by layering strings of clay, the sculptor is able to show the large number of individual



Figure 1 Seated Figurine with Elaborate Hairdressing
ca. 3000 BCE (Mehrgarh VI)
Baluchistan, Mehrgarh
Terracotta
National Museum , Karachi
h. 9.3 cm

necklace strings hanging from the figurine's neck. The top strand is further embellished with punched holes to indicate beads or designed metal.

The pile of necklaces rest on the figurine's large breasts which have pellets of clay applied to show the nipples. The breasts are indeed so large that they almost completely hide the figurine's arms which are tucked beneath the breasts. In contrast to the figurine's enlarged breasts is her tiny, pinched in waist. To create an hourglass shape, the figurine is broadened past the waist to represent the wide hips. The legs of the figurine are flattened and taper to a point. The lower torso is bent at the knees in order to give the impression that the figurine is sitting.⁶⁸ It is not uncommon for female figurines to be left unpainted⁶⁹ as this figurine, which has no traces of pigment, appears to have been. However similar figurines which do have traces of pigment were painted with red or black for the hair and yellow or red for the ornaments. The colors for the ornaments may have been chosen to give the impression of polished copper, carnelian, or gold.⁷⁰

Based on the features of this figurine, particularly its individualized and elaborate coiffures, prominent breasts with nipples, abundant jewelry, necklaces with delineated individual strands, and the arms tucked underneath the breasts, it can be placed in Period VI of the modern classification system of Harappan figurines.⁷¹ This dates the figurine to the Kot Diji Phase (3200 – 2900 BCE).⁷² Period VI figurines are, in general, refined versions of the figurines from the

⁶⁸ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) 382.

⁶⁹ I. Karthikeya Sarma and B. P. Singh. "Terracotta Art of Protohistoric India." *Journal of Indian History* 45 (1967): 775.

⁷⁰ Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) 382.

⁷¹ Possehl 178.

⁷² Ibid., 29.

earlier Neolithic periods and show a traceable evolution in the style of modeling for human figurines.

Mediterranean

This Cycladic Neolithic Female figurine, dating from 4500 to 4000 BCE, is an elegant example of the types of female figurines found through the Aegean



Figure 2 Cycladic Neolithic Female
ca. 4500 – 4000 BCE (Late Neolithic)
Cyclades
Marble
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
h. 21.4 cm

at this time. Although the figurine is headless, it is more likely that the head was broken off than never attached as the number of headless figurines of this style is minimal.⁷³ The arms meet in the center of the body and rest of the abdomen. No distinction is made for hands: rather the right and left arms blend together in the center. The arms form a rectangular silhouette for the upper torso, leaving a framed section where the breasts are depicted. While not ostensibly large (as is often the case in other

Neolithic Aegean figurines), the breasts are slightly diminutive, spaced and almost appear to sag.

⁷³ Saul S. Weinberg. "Neolithic Figurines and Aegean Interrelations." *American Journal of Archaeology* 55.2 (1951): 126.

The abdomen on which the arms rest protrudes like a shelf which cuts off and recedes into the pelvic area. At this point the thin waist and moderate proportions of the upper torso are countered by a steatopygous lower body beginning with the sharp protrusion of the figurine's backside. Although referred to earlier as the pelvic area beneath the abdominal shelf, there is no indication of an actual pelvic area on the figurine but a small empty space leading into the figurine's massive thighs. The upper thighs and knees are indicated with shallow incised lines causing the upper thighs to look pillow-like in shape. Below the knees the legs taper sharply into small round disks which represent the feet.

Analysis and Conclusions

The earliest examples clay figurines in South Asia in the 9th millennium BCE mark the formative stages of terracotta art in the area.⁷⁴ Before the Togau phase (4300 – 3800 BCE), figurines were typically gender ambiguous but just after 4000 BCE, figurines began to be given a gender, usually female.⁷⁵ Already with these early figurines the bird-like face and joint-legged features, which are still seen in later figurines like the Elaborate Headdress figurine, can be related stylistically to figurines from the Iranian Plateau.⁷⁶ By Period VI, the creation of all human figurines had become more popular evidenced especially by the effort exerted to depict complex details.⁷⁷ Although there are several variations, the Neolithic female figurines are stylistically related and were created at several

⁷⁴ Deo Prakash Sharma. *Harappan Art*. New Delhi: Sharada Pub. House, 2007. 177.

⁷⁵ Possehl 177.

⁷⁶ Sarma and Singh 178.

⁷⁷ Possehl 178.

centers of terracotta art, the most prominent being Mehrgarh, Sheri-khan-Tarakai, Kulli-Mehi, Zhob, Mundigak, and Rehman Dheri.⁷⁸

The first figurines with some form of modeling can be accurately dated on the Greek mainland belong to the Middle Neolithic, and in a few cases Early Neolithic Age.⁷⁹ These earliest cases embody a stylistic modeling of the body called *steatopygy*.⁸⁰ *Steatopygy* is a manner of distributing mass in figurines in which the lower body is shown as heavy with the buttocks and thighs displaying greatly exaggerated obesity. In some cases, this heavy modeling extends to the abdomen and even more rarely to the upper body.⁸¹ *Steatopygy* is evident in all female varieties of Neolithic figurines made of both stone and clay in the sub-Neolithic and Early Minoan I ages.⁸² The example here of the Cycladic Neolithic Female is a prime example of *steatopygous* figurines from the Aegean. The reason why Neolithic Aegeans chose to depict figurines in this way is impossible to conclude for sure. Starr, somewhat sarcastically but logically, suggests that it may have been in a time when food was not readily available in great quantities causing larger females to appear more attractive.

Another explanation for *steatopygy* in female figurines is that plumper females are also more likely to be successful in childbirth, which could have made them attractive.⁸³ This theory is supported by the dichotomy between male and female figures from this time. There are twelve thousand published examples of

⁷⁸ Sharma 178.

⁷⁹ Weinberg 130.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 129

⁸³ Starr 5.

Neolithic figurines and of those, only a small portion can be assigned a sex. The remaining neutral figures are sexless, unisex, androgynous, or just ambiguous. The number of male Neolithic figures is significantly lower compared to the female and neutral varieties. In all the Neolithic figurines from Southern Greece, only sixty-five of them can reliably be assigned a sex. Of these sixty-five, eighty-three percent are female, fifteen percent neutral, and only approximately one percent male.⁸⁴ While the female and neutral figurines are often shown with steatopygy, males are always normally proportional.⁸⁵ By looking exclusively at the contrast between male and female figurines, these facts suggest two theories – that female figurines were of greater importance than male figurines and that the use of steatopygy in female figurines bears some significance in the meaning or use of the figurines, such as fertility.

A curious feature of some standing figurines, including the figurine in this exhibit, is the angular abdominal protrusion. This appears in seated figurines reflecting the natural bulge that occurs when sitting. It is possible that the feature was then copied into standing figurines despite no longer being applicable.⁸⁶ If this does account for the abnormal feature, it marks the beginnings of a tendency to stylize figurines rather than depict that naturally.

⁸⁴ Moira Donald and Linda Hurcombe. *Representations of Gender from Prehistory to the Present*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 5.

⁸⁵ Joan R. Mertens. "Some Long Thoughts on Early Cycladic Sculpture." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 33 (1998): 18.

⁸⁶ Weinberg 125.



Figure 4 Seated Neolithic Female
ca. 7000 – 2700 BCE
Crete
Clay

Aegean, figurines with steatopygy can be found throughout the eastern Mediterranean and in Southern Europe⁸⁸, including Cyprus.⁸⁹ Despite the presence of steatopygy, examples resembling the figurines in the Aegean world are rare. However a few examples do exist in Asia Minor⁹⁰, causing Weinberg to put forward the theory that their creation was influenced by a mother culture originating in Western Asia.⁹¹ If the presence

Although there is little archaeological evidence to show a connection between the Greek mainland and Crete, the stylistically similar figurines show that there must have been some relation.⁸⁷ The similar style of the piece in this collection, which originates in the Cycladic Islands, compared to examples from the Greek mainland and Crete (Figure 3, Figure 4), proves that Cyclades were part of this interaction as well. Beyond the



Figure 3 Spartan Neolithic Figurine
ca. 7000 – 2700 BCE
Sparta
Marble

⁸⁷ Weinberg 121.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 132.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 131

⁹¹ Ibid., 121.

of steatopygous figurines was due to a religious influence from Western Asia, it would represent an early movement of ideas from east to west. However with little knowledge of the Neolithic era and the lack of any written language, this would be impossible to prove. Although the use of steatopygy may have come from West Asia, any religious significance of these figurines does not necessarily have to have originated in another area. A mother goddess cult is the most basic of religions, appealing to two of the most important facets of life at the time – childbirth and earthly abundance – and could easily have developed independently in various areas of the world. Conversely, based on the number of remarkably similar steatopygous figurines found in the Aegean, it is possible that the form moved from the Aegean to the east. If Starr's conjecture as to the reason for depicted steatopygy was true, then if one area can be shown scientifically to have been less fertile in plants and game, it can be tentatively assigned as the site of origin.

In examining the possible connections between the Indus and Aegean figurines, it is unlikely that there was any type of interaction this early, as no trade existed as was necessary. However if there is a connection between the figurines from West Asia and the Aegean or The Indus and Iranian Plateau , it could be the result of early nomadic groups. It is possible that the nomadic lifestyle carried groups of people across Eurasia thereby spreading ideas, most likely related to religion and rituals, over a large area. This would be impossible to prove, however, for if ideas were spread over such a large area they would more than likely be general and spread evenly over the continents.

Period 2: 3000 – 2000 BCE

Historical Contexts

South Asia

By 3000 BCE in South Asia, communities similar to Mehrgarh could be found throughout Baluchistan and the Indus Valley basin. The culture that had been developing since 7000 BCE became the basis of the Harappan culture of the Indus Valley Civilization. The great cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, are both in the north-west area of what is now India and Pakistan. These cities and their surrounding areas had local governments comprised of intricate chieftaincies and a hierarchical ranking system. Huge citadels and other monumental structures suggest that the state was impressive and powerful. Unfortunately without any decipherable texts, we cannot ascertain how this system worked and how much power the different ranks held.

In order to maintain their urban system, however, the Indus people would have needed a surplus of production, sophisticated commerce, and an elaborate division of labor. This would provide people with the opportunity for specialization in their respective fields, which leads to technological advancements. The existence of these systems is reinforced through archaeological evidence of grain storage facilities, foreign trade goods, and craft workshops. Ecological evidence of deforestation suggests wood was used extensively in construction and may have caused an increase in floods and erosion that might have contributed to the later devolution of the Indus cities.

The beginning of the Harappan Period in the Indus Valley Civilization is placed at 2600 BCE at which time the entire Indus Valley became integrated.

Large cities and towns emerged at major centers of agricultural regions. The area of the civilization at this point was twice as large as the contemporary civilizations at Mesopotamia and Egypt. Although over fifteen hundred settlements have been discovered, only a few have been excavated.

The most fascinating quality of the Indus Civilization is its urban planning, seen particularly well in Mohenjo-Daro. The cities were built on huge mud brick platforms in order to protect them against flooding. The streets and buildings were built on a grid, an example of the prior planning that went into the city's creation. There was also a city-wide drainage and water supply system made with covered pipes that lined the streets to connect buildings to wells. The large halls and industrial complexes suggest that the state controlled the economic resources and their production. The sophistication of the cities is evidence of the strength of the ruling class or government as well as of the cities themselves.

A large number of utilitarian and decorative objects were created during this time using a wide range of techniques. The Harappan people appear to have saved copper bronze for use in making ornaments, tools, mirrors, and pots and pans. Bone, shell, or ivory were also used for tools and ornaments as well as for gaming pieces and inlay for furniture. Ornaments of silver, gold, and faience along with stoneware bangles were also found, all of which were mostly likely adornments for the wealthy or ruling class. Similar versions of these ornaments have been found in terracotta and were probably used by the lower classes.⁹² The existence of ornaments in both precious metals and terracotta also indicated that

⁹² Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York,N.Y.) 379.

ornaments were an important aspect of Harappan daily attire and, based on art, were especially important to the beautification of women.

Mediterranean

For Greece, the start of the third millennium BCE saw a huge civilization-changing technological advancement – the development of the alloy bronze. The period from 3000 to 2000 BCE is dubbed the Early Bronze Age after this technological advancement. By mixing tin or a harder metal with soft copper, the people were able to create stronger and more durable bronze tools. Bronze also affected the development of society. Those who could acquire bronze or other precious metals quickly became the wealthy ‘upper’ class. The demand for high quality metal objects and the creation of metalworking specialists to meet this demand greatly expanded and stabilized the economic state in the Early Bronze Age.

The political structures at this time mostly consisted of a scattering of large towns with fortified walls and monumental buildings throughout the Greek mainland, the Cycladic Islands, and Crete. The Cycladic Islands in particular had smaller towns populated by people who were frequently at sea. Not long after this, in the next millennium, the island of Crete would become the center of the Middle Bronze Age Civilizations. Around 2200 BCE there is evidence for the destruction or collapse of many of the Early Bronze Age towns. This decline is credited to the invasion of Greece by a foreign race, the Aryans, whose impact on the culture of Greece is seen more in the second millennium.

Although Greece was still in the formative stage of civilization, civilization was already well established in the Near East. The beginning of civilization is placed in Mesopotamia around 3,500 BCE and three hundred years later, in 3,200 BCE, in Egypt. Accordingly, the rise of Minoan civilization in Crete was highly dependent on the examples of both of the established areas.

Exhibition Objects

South Asian

A masterpiece of Harappan terracottas, the Female Figurine with Flower Headdress features the typical Indus custom of elaborate adornments. A small round ball forms the head of the figurine which is considerably outsized by the grand headdress on top of it. Four-petalled flowers form a semi circle over the top half of the figurine's head. Braided stalks lead



**Figure 5 Female Figurine with Flower Headdress
ca. 2600 – 1900 BCE (Harappan)
Indus Valley, Harappa
Terracotta
National Museum, Karachi
h. 13.2 cm**

from the side flowers to the back of headdress which is formed into two panniers. Directly behind the flowers in the center is a fan shape which is empty of further details. On her neck the figurine wears three chokers of applied clay strips, the lowest of which is further decorated with hanging triangular shapes. Under the choker, a double stranded necklace with round pendant falls into the middle of the figurine's breasts. While one breast is broken, the other appears in tact and has a cone-like shape.

The single remaining arm is shown originating a little above the breasts and protrudes out from the figurine before reconnecting with it at under the hips. Beneath the breasts, the figurine tapers in to form the slender waist before filling out to form the side waist. Clearly marked with a punched hole is the figurine's naval. At the figurine's hips hangs a triple strand belt with three round pellets attached to the front. A little lower than the belt is a horizontal line showing the end of a narrow loin cloth⁹³. The jewelry and ornaments represented on this figurine consistent with discoveries of Indus jewelry traditions at Mohenjo-Daro, Allahdino, and Harappa.⁹⁴ Unfortunately the rest of the figurine's lower torso has been lost but the remaining upper portion is sufficient proof of its beauty.

Mediterranean

Despite being labeled as a Cycladic Female Figurine, this piece is actually from late third millennium Crete. The nomenclature of 'Cycladic' refers to the origin of the style rather than its location. This figurine is, for the most part, typical of the Spedos type of Cycladic Folded Arm Figurines (FAF). The FAF

⁹³ I. Karthikeya Sarma and B. P. Singh. "Terracotta Art of Protohistoric India." *Journal of Indian History* 45 (1967): 780.

⁹⁴ Deo Prakash Sharma. *Harappan art*. New Delhi: Sharada Pub. House, 2007. 210.



Figure 6 Cycladic Female Figurine
2500 – 2000 BCE (Early Bronze Age)
Archanes, Crete
Bone or Ivory
Archaeological Museum, Heraklion,
Crete, Greece
h. 8.5 cm

category is the later and more salient of two types of Cycladic idols.⁹⁵ The Spedos variety is based on the group of figurines found as the Spedos cemetery in Naxos.⁹⁶ However the Spedos variety has also been found throughout the Cyclades, Crete, and mainland Greece.⁹⁷ The head of the figurine is facing upward, showcasing a prominent, slightly rounded chin. The only facial feature depicted is the nose, which is large and bird-like. It originates at the forehead and continues into the middle of the face. A long neck supports the head and opens onto narrow, angular shoulders. The shoulders combine with the folded arms to form a rectangle that frames the upper torso. The arms fold right over left and, although no hands are detailed, an incised line separates the arms across the abdomen.

The upper torso is devoid of detail, not showing any markings of the figurine's

breasts. Immediately underneath the crossed arms is the figurine's pelvic area,

⁹⁵ Renfrew 9.

⁹⁶ Renfrew 11.

⁹⁷ Renfrew 21.

demarcated by an incised triangle and filled with punched holes to represent the pubic hair. The legs are joined from the thighs through the knees with the right and left legs being distinguished by an incised line. Past the knees, the legs are slightly separated, culminating in a mildly pointed pair of feet. Unlike the hands, the feet are further detailed with incised lines depicting the toes. The entire figurine appears top heavy, with the width of the upper torso extending just past the hips. With the exception of the punctuated holes, all of the figurine's features are consistent with the FAF type. It can be further assigned to the Spedos variety by the placement of the figurine's midpoint at the folded right arm.⁹⁸

With the lack of clear anatomical markers, such as breasts or male genitalia, the description of this figurine as a female comes into question. Most early Greek figurines are shown with breasts or as sexless and only few are depicted with male genitalia. In cases such as the Cycladic Female Figurine in this exhibit, the sex can be determined as female through the incision of the pubic area triangle, which conspicuously lacks male genitalia.⁹⁹ In this piece especially, the punch dots in the pubic triangle further supports its identification as a female as other figurines with this same feature also have clearly defined breasts.

The size of the figurine at 8.5 cm puts it at the shorter end of the height spectrum for these figurines, which ranges from 5 cm to 1.5 m.¹⁰⁰ Most or all of these figurines would have had paint on its face and sometimes even on its body as evidenced by several FAF figurines that have been found with traces of red

⁹⁸ Renfrew 15.

⁹⁹ Peter J. Ucko. *Anthropomorphic Figurines of Predynastic Egypt and Neolithic Crete with Comparative Material from the Prehistoric Near East and Mainland Greece*. London: A. Szmidla, 1968. 377.

¹⁰⁰ Renfrew 1.

pigment. This may also account for the incised lines which might have been used to take pigment.¹⁰¹

Analysis and Conclusions

The two figurines in this section represent perfectly a trend in Aegean and South Asian art which was already visible in the previous examples. The stylized and simple Cycladic figurine contrasts heavily with the highly adorned Figurine with the Flower Headdress. This contrasting feature continues to occur in many of the later examples of female figurines. Despite being so starkly contrasted, both figurines have parallels in the Near East.

The most decorative feature of the entire terracotta figurine is of course, the flower headdress. Some scholars argue that this headdress is a clay imitation of headdresses worn in Mesopotamia that were brought over by trade to the Indus.¹⁰² These headdresses (Figure 7) were worn by Sumerian courtiers during the First Dynasty of Ur in 2600 to 2450 BCE. The headdresses were diadems with willow beech leaves formed in sheet gold. In the back were placed three eight-petalled flowers also made of sheet gold flowering from long stems.¹⁰³ Most of the goldwork discovered in Mesopotamia comes from the Royal Cemetery at Ur. As gold, along with silver, copper, lapis lazuli, and carnelian, was imported to Mesopotamia, the material was clearly regarded as precious in Mesopotamia and, as evidenced by the Royal Cemetery at Ur, reserved for the elite.

¹⁰¹ Renfrew 23.

¹⁰² Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) 392.

¹⁰³ E. C. L. During Caspers and 12th International Conference. "Vanity Portrayed in Clay: The Female Terracotta Figurines from Harappa." (1994) 190.



Figure 7 Mesopotamian Headdress
ca. 2550 – 2400 BCE (Early Dynastic IIIA)
Ur, Mesopotamia
Gold, Lapis Lazuli, Carnelian
University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Philadelphia
Comb h. 36 cm, hair ring diam. 2.7 cm, earring diam. 11cm.

Considering the similarity of the headdress to the headdress of the terracotta figurine and the extent of Mesopotamian trade already in existence at this time, this comparison is not without basis. If the figurine is meant to be a Mother Goddess, it would follow logically that the Indus people would want to depict her in the height of finery and would use for example the flourishing Mesopotamian Civilization and the garb of its elite.

In the case of the Cycladic figurine, it represents a class of figures which is present throughout the Aegean in almost identical forms. Of the few types the figurines have been characterized into by modern scholars, this example is from the Spedos group, a type found in abundance in Naxos but also significantly

present throughout the Cyclades, Crete, and mainland Greece.¹⁰⁴ Despite the rigid compliance with the style's conventions, this example contains a feature not typical of Aegean figurines, the punched holes in the pelvic area representing the pubic hair. Although uncommon in the Aegean, this artistic convention can be found on figurines throughout the Near East and even in Egypt (Figure 9, Figure



Figure 9 Egyptian Figurine
ca. 2900 BCE (Archaic Period)
Hierakonpolis, Egypt
Lapis Lazuli
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
H. 3.5 in., W. 1 in.



Figure 8 Anatolian
Figurine
ca. 2500 – 2200 BCE
(Early Bronze Age)
Hasanoglam, Anatolia
Silver and Gold
Museum of Anatolian
Civilizations, Ankara



Figure 10 Ishtar Temple Figurine
ca. 2500 – 2000 BCE
(Early Bronze Age)
Mari, Syria
Terracotta
National Museum, Aleppo, Syria
h. 14.2 cm

¹⁰⁴ Renfrew 21.

8, Figure 10).

Here also there is little to be found comparatively similar between the examples from the Aegean and Indus. However, both already show a definite influence from the Near East, meaning the spheres of influence are already starting to cross paths. Indeed, the Cycladic figurine with its dotted pelvic area does exhibit a single example of decoration, following tendency characteristic of both the Near East and the Indus Valley.

Period 3: 2000 – 1000 BCE

Historical Contexts

South Asia

During the 2nd millennium BCE, the communities on the Indian subcontinent also saw a great change. From 2000 BCE, the Indus Valley people began leaving the great cities and centers of high civilization for smaller villages. However although the cities were deserted, they were not destroyed, as was previously believed, by foreign invaders. At the same time that people were leaving the cities, new settlements were arising in Eastern Punjab and Gujarat. While smaller, these new sites retained the main cultural elements of their Harappan predecessors. However this move also led to the loss of clay seals and language in the area.

Scholars have long questioned the reason for such a drastic change in Indus society, believing it to only be possible as a result of foreign invasion. However the Harappans were not only susceptible to attack, but also to changes in the environment, which is the more likely reason for the shift. A change in the flow of the ancient (and now dry) Saraswati River into rivers in the Indus and Ganges system is believed to have caused a great flooding of many of the Harappan settlements. While Mohenjo-Daro survived due to its location on a higher level, many smaller settlements were destroyed. This shift had great impact on the agricultural and long distance trade networks and left many people as refugees in search of new homes or better conditions. This would account for the

gradual shift to the Gangetic plain as well as the status of Mohenjo-Daro, which survived but had a significantly lower population than earlier.

The theory about a foreign invasion of the Indus Valley Civilization, which is no longer considered valid today, is based on the prevalence of Aryan culture and ideas seen in post-Harappan South Asia. The mix of Aryan cultural elements into the Indian subcontinent is the greatest evidence for cultural diffusion at this time. The language that emerges later in India, Sanskrit, is, like Greek, part of the Indo-Aryan language family. This is clear proof that there was some spread of ideas, perhaps due to the travels of the Aryan peoples. The Aryans were a group of people who lived in both settled and nomadic communities. This group probably spoke some early form of the Indo-Aryan language and practiced a religion with gods and goddesses who became prototypes for both Greek and Vedic gods. As nomadic herders and traders, the Aryans probably migrated annually from highlands to lowlands and brought with them goods to trade. A study of genes shows that the Aryans also arranged marriages between themselves and the people settled in India. The overlapping of genetic traits proves that there was contact between Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Indus for thousands of years even before the Harappan civilization.

The period of the shift to smaller communities is considered to be the Late Harappan phase of the Indus Valley Civilization. This migration led to the creation of three localized cultures in separate regions of the Indus and Gujarat. The formation of these distinct cultures, also called the Localization Era (and at the same time as the Late Harappan Phase) continued until 1300 BCE.

Technological and artistic changes also occurred with this phase as the techniques for bead making and painting changed. However from 1800 BCE until 800 BCE, the representation of human figurines with pinched features and appliqué hairstyles and ornaments continued on in the third millennium style of the Indus Valley Civilization.

From this time until the mid first millennium BCE, sculpture and artifacts from India become scarce. There are many possible reasons to explain this drop in artifacts. One reason might simply be due to lack of excavations. There remain a large number of ancient sites which have not been excavated due to many factors including politics and the existence of modern cities on top of ancient ruins. Another explanation could be that along with the migration and the loss of language and clay seals, there was also a loss in technological knowledge or accessibility to sustaining materials which caused the people to make objects of perishable material which no longer survive today.

Although this period is earlier than the Greek 'Dark Ages', it bears many similarities to this period in Greek history, which will be discussed in the next chapter, and can be somewhat accurately referred to as the Indian 'Dark Age'. The loss of trade contacts during this time would have also led to a decline or loss in foreign influences. Thus it is possible that the few works of art that were produced during this time were of wholly Indian conception even though they were inspired by earlier foreign-influenced Harappan works.

Mediterranean

It was not for more than a thousand years after the beginning of Minoan civilization that Cretan influence begins to be seen in southern and central Greece due to the trade relations that started around 2000 BCE. The prominence of Minoan culture at this time, which was at the beginning of its apogee, made it inevitable that it would have a large role in the formation of Mycenaean Greek civilization and culture. Most importantly, the Greeks borrowed the political and writing systems of the Minoans. From 1600 BCE to 1400 BCE, the Early Mycenaean civilization saw a rise in population and foreign trade as well as stronger economical and political systems. Early rulers were warrior chiefs who would become the monarchs of the great city centers.

With the Mycenaean Greeks forming strong societies, the new civilization was able to invade and conquer the older Minoan civilization around 1450 BCE, although this invasion most likely did not make a huge change in Cretan culture and society. Continuing to grow in strength throughout the 14th and 13th centuries BCE, the new kings built grand palaces at the city centers. Graves from this time show an augmented number of luxury items which suggest an active trade by the Mycenaean with Crete, Cyprus, Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, and Western Europe. By 1375 BCE, the Mycenaean jumpstarted the decline of Cretan culture with the burning of the vital city of Knossos.

The Mycenaean reached the height of their civilization between 1400 BCE and 1200 BCE. Known as being people of the sea, Mycenaean artifacts were found as far as Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. This suggests the Mycenaean had diplomatic and trade relations with the Hittite Empire which reigned from 1575

BCE till 1087 BCE and covered Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt. However the quickly dominating Mycenaean culture did not lose its connection to its Minoan predecessors. Their art and architecture clearly reflected Minoan styles with slight alterations to make them more suited to Mycenaean society. Although the Mycenaeans borrowed their writing system from the Minoan Linear A script, their script, Linear B, is from a different language family, the Indo-European family. The presence of an Indo-European language at this time is evidence that some Aryan people from the region of Central Asia had already migrated over to the Mediterranean.

Bronze Age Mycenaean Civilization is most popularly known as the setting for the great Homeric epics, *The Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Although the epics were put into writing much later, the culture depicted is clearly from the Bronze Age. The epics originated in the Bronze Age and may have been transmitted orally. The later Greeks, who considered the Homeric epics to be accounts of their own history, placed the Trojan War, the subject of the *Iliad*, around 1300 BCE. Although there is no concrete evidence for a great war between the Trojans and the Greeks, particularly one started over the capture of the beautiful Grecian Queen Helen, there was a rapid decline in Mycenaean civilization dating to approximately 1200 BCE. At this time, the palace centers as well as the surrounding towns and villages were attacked, destroyed, and subsequently abandoned. This was considered to be the start of what is known as the Greek 'Dark Ages', which would last until 800 BCE. In wake of the destruction of the cities, archaeological evidence shows that small villages arose within the ruined

fortifications of the old palaces. Many Greeks left the mainland and migrated to Achaea, Arcadia, Palestine, and Cyprus. By 1000 BCE, Greece saw its lowest population in thousands of years. Along with the fall of the Bronze Age Mycenaeans came the loss of its far-reaching trade contacts, leaving Greece without both raw and manufactured goods and, in particular, without access to bronze.

Interestingly, around the same time as the fall of the Mycenaean Civilization came the fall of many of the surrounding civilizations, encompassing the Hittite Empire and the entire Eastern Mediterranean region, including the city of Troy. Even Egypt experienced a lull at this time in its ever-enduring civilization. Whatever the cause for these declines, it is clear that it was widespread and cataclysmic enough to have affected most of the Mediterranean and even beyond.

With the loss of bronze, the Greeks switched to the use of iron, which is actually stronger and was better suited to the Greeks' needs than bronze. This switch is reflected in the naming of this new period to Iron Age Greece. Despite the fall, a new artistic style arose around 1050 BCE, aided by the availability of a faster potter's wheel and new use of compasses to make precise shapes. This new style is known as the Proto-Geometric style and is characterized by the use of geometric shapes and patterns on pottery with a notable absence of sentient beings and narrative scenes.

Exhibition Objects

South Asian

The Female Vessel-Shaped Figurines were created at a time of transition for South Asia. Despite the flat, round, vessel-shaped head, the figurine is actually completely solid.¹⁰⁵ The neck of the 'vessel' swells to accommodate the figurine's face, which is framed by long, applied ears. An applied nose almost as long as the ears dominates the center of the face with two small holes on either side for the eyes and a barely discernible incised line underneath for the mouth. The silhouette then narrows again to portray the figurine's neck before gradually sloping out to create the shoulders and arms. The arms are stub-like and extend out horizontally to the side of the figurine.



Figure 11 Female Vessel-Shaped Figurine
ca. 1000 - 500 BCE (Indus River Valley)
Swat Valley, India
Terracotta
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
h. 23.5 cm

¹⁰⁵ Amy Poster. "From Indian Earth: 4000 Years of Terracotta Art." *Festival of India in the United States, 1985-1986*. Ed. Inc Harry N. Abrams. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1985. 84.

Small punched holes originating at the neck line form a pattern of three lines, the first two remaining close to the neck and the third falling almost to the figurine's waist. These most likely are meant to represent beaded necklaces. In the middle of the space encircled by the punched designs are two small, applied breasts which, despite their size, protrude from the noticeably from the body. The breasts have an increased conspicuousness because they take up so little room on the enlarged and mostly flat upper torso.

Beneath the necklace, the figurine's form curves in to suggest a slender waist before filling out again to emphasize the wide hips. To complete the hourglass form, the body tapers off immediately after the hips to a smaller point where the two feet, represented simply by angling the clay forward into a ridge. No other modeling is seen on the legs. There is no indication of the knees but the legs are separated from one another at the thighs before rejoining at the feet. Although there is no indication of the pelvic area, there is similarly no indication of clothing being worn by the figurine.

Mediterranean

This Tau figurine is an example of a prolific pottery class in the Aegean during the late 2nd millennium BCE. The flared top of the figurine is formed into the shape of a vessel lip. However this 'lip' is more likely the headdress of the figurine due to the painted details of a festoon, vertical band, and fringe, which possibly represents hair poking out from underneath the headdress.¹⁰⁶ This vessel-like headdress narrows immensely to form an elongated face, marked only by a

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth French. "The Development of Mycenaean Terracotta Figurines." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 66 (1971): 124.

pinched, bird-like nose and painted dots for eyes. A painted line separates the head from the upper torso which is dominated by the crossed arms.

The arms appear to have been formed from the clay and then bent into to mesh into the torso. The left arm crosses in front of the right but a painted decoration of vertical lines suggests both arms were filled with bangles. The arms presumably cover the breasts, which are not even suggested in the figurine.

Beneath the arms the figurine's hollow stem narrows to depict the waist before widening out to form a dense, cone-like shape resembling a skirt. Two painted vertical lines decorate the skirt, possibly mimicking decorations found in typical Mycenaean attire. The pair of painted vertical lines, arms folded over the breasts, and hollow stem is typical of the basic Tau type.¹⁰⁷

This terracotta alabastron is a tiny figurine from the 6th century BCE. The vase is formed using two molded images of this woman which are joined together to



Figure 12 Tau Figurine
ca. 1400 – 1300 BCE
(Late Helladic IIIA)
Mycenae
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
h. 10.8 cm

¹⁰⁷ French 124.

form a hollow vessel. On the top of the figurine's head is a tiny rim which could double as the figurine's headdress. By using the molds, the artist was able to obtain highly precise details as is seen in the head where the hair can be seen to part in the center, fall behind the ears, and cascade down in separate locks that lay over the shoulders.

The face shows detailed almond eyes under high brows, a softly modeled nose, and delicately shaped mouth. The figurine wears a long garment of which the folds, drapes, and sleeves can be seen. In her left hand she holds a dove to her chest, a convention associated with the goddess Aphrodite¹⁰⁸ (discussed in Period 5), while her right holds up the folds of her dress. The presence of the dove indicates that this alabastron was used to carry perfume to be offered at the altars of Aphrodite.¹⁰⁹ Her feet are slightly apart with the left slight forward from the right and rest on a square base. The stylistic conventions used, especially the almond-shaped eyes, lightly suggested drapery,



**Figure 13 Terracotta Alabastron
ca. 550 BCE
(Archaic)
East Greece
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New
York
h. 27 cm**

¹⁰⁸ Miroslav Marcovich. "From Ishtar to Aphrodite." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 30.2, Special Issue: Distinguished Humanities Lectures II (1996): 51.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

and dove held at the chest, are characteristic of the archaic period to which this figurine belongs. Alabastrons like this one were the precursors the later kouri, Greek female figures, and caryatids, columns formed by female figures, such as those seen in the Leaning Aphrodite figure in Period 5.

Analysis and Conclusions

In this section two objects are being shown from the Aegean, one from this time period and one from the mid-first millennium BCE. This choice was made in order to show the possible evolution of this style in relation to the Indus example. The Indus example in this case is actually dated to the first millennium BCE as well but with the decline of the Indus Civilization, the creation of terracotta figurines decreased as well and examples are virtually non-existent. Despite being from a later time period, the figurine still represents the period of transition in the Indus Valley which exists from its decline in 2000 BCE until the formation of the Mauryan Empire in the late first millennium BCE. Thus despite the broad range of dating, stylistically this piece can be tentatively placed in early first millennium BCE.

The comparison between these three figurines rests in their connection to the type of vessel called an alabastron which take the form of female figurines. Alabastrons were small vessels used usually to carry luxury items such as oil and perfume. The use of the alabastron came from either the Near East or Egypt from where it moved to Cyprus and then Greece.¹¹⁰ Based on the earlier system of

¹¹⁰ National Gallery of Art (U.S.). *The Human Figure in Early Greek Art*. Athens; Washington: Greek Ministry of Culture; National Gallery of Art, 1988. 128.

trade the Indus shared with both the Near East and Egypt and the tendency for trade to involve luxury goods, it is possible that alabastrons found their way into the Indus Valley, although none have been found. However in one aspect the Indus example follows the early Psi figurine more closely than the later alabastron, they are both solid. In the case of the Tau figurine, despite the appearance of the headdress as being in the shape of the neck and brim of a vessel, there is no evidence to suggest this was a feature based off of Near Eastern examples rather than a mere stylistic choice.

For the Indus example there is no apparent reason for including this small brim over the figurine's head. Although most figurines in this time period are less sophisticated imitations of Harappan works, the vessel-shape bears no resemblance to the elaborate headdresses seen on earlier figurines. In fact the shape and the size of the vessel brim are almost identical to the later alabastron. A possible theory for the inclusion of the vessel top in the Indus figurine but for the figurine still being solid is that the Indus people were influenced by both. The Tau figurines were extremely common in the Aegean world and, being small, could have easily been transported by trade across to the Indus, probably more as a personal religious idol of a merchant than a commodity.

The alabastron, which has earlier examples in the Near East, could have also been present in the Indus. The Indus sculptor may have thought that the Tau figurine, due to its shape and small size, was also an example of the vessel type he or she was trying to imitate. Conversely, if the sculptor was trying to create a religious idol, he or she may have mistaken the alabastron to be of that purpose

and pulled the brim from the alabastron and the solid figurine from the Tau figurine. Without knowing more about the transitional phase of the Indus Civilization, it would be hard to make more definite conclusions about what stimuli were available to the Indus artists and even more difficult to understand this particularly sculptor's intent.

Period 4: 1000 – 500 BCE

Historical Contexts

South Asia

This period of time is also a formative period in the South Asian subcontinent. Like the Greeks, the Indians converted from bronze to iron for tools and weapons, a shift which aided their ability to expand throughout the Gangetic basin. Iron tools were instrumental in clearing forests for the creation of more arable land. With the new ability to expand and more farmable land available, the Indian communities shifted from pastoral lifestyles to sedentary agriculture. The nucleus of South Asian civilization at this point moved west into the plains of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers. This evolution set the stage for a new political system and political consolidation, which took place around 1000 BCE.

At this time in the Indian subcontinent the presence and influence of the Aryans is clearly observable. The Vedic period and the Late Harappan Period occur mostly concurrently, from around 1900 BCE till 800 BCE. The period from 1000 BCE till 500 BCE is considered the later Vedic Period. This period is so named as it is the time during which the *Vedas*, the sacred texts which will later become the original books of the Hindu religion, were written. As they were composed in Sanskrit, an Indo-European language, this is irrefutable proof that there were not only Aryans present in the South Asian subcontinent at this time, but that they also had a substantial presence and power in the society.

Social stratification at this point was based on clans, called Janapadas, which were determined by occupation or wealth of cattle or land. As the lifestyle

turned towards settled agriculture, land began to supersede cattle as a determiner of wealth. The land-owning and cattle-keeping clans quickly became the ruling class in society. The clans were then further broken down into ruler and commoner lineages. By this time, the caste system was already in place although there is some evidence that it was not as rigid then as it became in later years. There were the four Varna groupings consisting of Brahmins (priests), Kshatriya (warriors), Vaisha (farmers, herdsman, and merchants), and the Shudra, or lower people, who consisted of the lower class Aryans as well as the non-Aryans. There is also *jati*, caste, based on occupation, which are far more numerous than the four varnas. It appears that marriage between castes was acceptable at this time. As this is seldom allowed in modern India, it suggests that the caste system was weaker then. As clusters of clansmen began to congregate in different regions, they began forming state-like entities called Mahajanapadas, leading to the creation of sixteen Mahajanapada states by the 6th century BCE.

Between 900 BCE and 500 BCE, two of the other major religions in India also developed – Buddhism and Jainism – both apparently in reaction against the Vedic Hindu religion. Buddhism was begun by Prince Siddhartha who renounced his royal lineage and became an ascetic in order to find enlightenment. After finding enlightenment, he was christened Buddha and was sent to help others also reach the path of enlightenment. Jainism was created by the prince Mahavira who also renounced his wealth, like Buddha. Although similar in many aspects to Buddhism, it differs in its customs and tenets.

Mediterranean

The 2nd millennium BCE begins in the Mediterranean with Greece still in its Dark or Iron Age. With many Greeks living in smaller towns or having migrated over to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, the greatly reduced communities were reflected in their state structure. The *baseilus*, a leader who had previously been a state official under the *wanax*, warrior chief kings, became the new rulers. They in no way had the great power and or grand palaces of the Mycenaean *wanax*. By the end of the Dark Ages in 800 BCE, the Mediterranean had recovered from the widespread collapse of Bronze Age cultures and numerous city-states bespeckled the land.

Trade and writing, both lost after the Bronze Age, were revived with the beginning of the Archaic Age in 700 BCE. This time, the Greeks borrowed their writing system from the Phoenicians and adapted it to their spoken language. With writing came the ‘setting down’ so to speak of the Greek Pantheon in its essential form by the ancient author Hesiod in his work *Theogeny*. The return of trade brought luxury goods for importing and exporting back to Greek culture and resulted in a much greater number of trade contacts than those that had existed in Bronze Age Greece. By the 7th or 6th centuries BCE, there was a mutual trade relationship between the east and west. This relationship was further aided by the migration of the Greek people in the Dark Ages to the coast of Anatolia.

The city-states which were beginning to form in the Dark Ages became clearly established political entities in the Archaic Age (i.e. The well known cities of Athens, Sparta, and Corinth). Although all the city-states shared a common language with the same or very similar writing, religion, and artistic styles, they

were not politically united and in fact often enemies. However the rise of the Persian Empire to the east necessitated a change in this independence. The Persian Empire under Cyrus II became the largest of all ancient Near Eastern empires. It was not until they brought the areas of the Levant and Anatolia, where there were many Greek colonies, under their control that the Greeks really came into contact with them. The threat of the Persians led to the need for Panhellenism, or a unified Greek front. By 522 the Persians had also conquered Egypt, practically surrounding the Greek cities and setting the stage for the Persian War.

The Proto-Geometric style that began in 1050 BCE evolved around 900 BCE into the Geometric style. Although artworks were still lacking in human imagery, the linear patterns became more intricate with new patterns evolving. Relatively quickly, the Geometric style transformed into the Orientalizing style, so named due to the permeation of Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs in Greek art. Not quick to lose their artistic heritage, the Greeks started incorporating rosettes, griffins, and sirens in their artwork around 720 BCE. Along with pottery, there was an enhanced production of votive offerings, figural beings created as gifts to the gods. These figurines often took the form of kouros, naked young men, and koroi, always clothed young maidens. The votives ranged in size but, taking note from the Egyptians, the Greeks were able to create large free standing figurines for the first time.

Exhibition Objects

South Asian

The Molded Female Figurine with Headdress is an example of some of the first figurines created during the reinstatement of terracotta sculpture in South Asia. By using a sharp tool, the artist created incredibly elaborate and stylized embellishments for the figurine. What can only be identified as a headdress overwhelms the figurine's face. Three flowers, two on either side and one on the upper center, line the front of the headdress. Further components behind the flowers appear to be the flowers' leaves and stems. Underneath the center flower diagonal incised lines represent the figurine's hair, which has a center part adorned with an oval pendant.¹¹¹ Under the side flowers on each side are round discs with the sides facing front and marked with horizontal



Figure 14 Molded Female Figurine with Headdress
ca. 1000 – 500 BCE (Pre-Mauryan)
Sar-Dehri
Terracotta
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
h. 24.8 cm

¹¹¹ Joachim Bautze. "Some Observations on Female 'Maurya' Terracotta Figurines." *South Asian Archaeology 1987 : Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference of the Association of South Asian Archaeologists in Western Europe, held in the Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice 1* (1990): 612.

lines. Although they appear to be part of the headdress and are in fact connected to the top from the back, these discs serve as large earrings which hang to the figurine's shoulder.¹¹²

Although the body is hand-molded, the figurine's face is made through the use of a mold, causing the eyebrows, eye lids, and mouth to appear as though they have been attached separately.¹¹³ The head faces slightly upwards with the eyes closed in a restive, meditative state. A wide choker adorns the figurine's neck with several incised lines demarcating the different strands and a large pendant in the center. Five circular beads hanging from the choker are also further decorated with horizontally incised lines. Affixed to the choker is a *channavira*,¹¹⁴ a double-stranded chain which falls through the middle of the small, molded breasts and off to either side of the body. More round pendants with incised lines are arranged on the chain. A larger round pendant with two crossed lines acts as the clasp for the *channavira* and lies directly in between the breasts.

The stubby arms extend out from the side of the figurine so that they are almost in line with the shoulders. Incised lines on the edges of the stumps represent the figurine's hand and fingers and vertical lines suggest the arms are full of bangles. A small ridge around the hips forms what is possibly a girdle. Either the girdle covers the pelvic area or the artist chose in this case not to represent it. Double vertical lines ending in a bulbous pendant on either leg hang

¹¹² Bautze 615.

¹¹³ Madhukar Keshav Dhavalikar. *Masterpieces of Indian Terracottas*. Bombay: Taraporevala, 1977. 22.

¹¹⁴ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. "Archaic Indian Terracottas." *From River Banks and Sacred Places : Ancient Indian Terracottas: An Exhibition to Commemorate the One-Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy*. Eds. Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy , and Joyce Paulson. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1977. 8.

from the girdle. A single incised line marks the separation between the figurine's legs, which taper to a small ridge for the feet. Half of the legs, from where the knees might have been down, are more horizontal lines. These possibly represent the folds of a garment worn on the lower body.

The artist included incised details on the back of the figurine as well. From behind the headdress falls long strands of braided hair, which falls past the figurine's shoulders. The *channavira* as well can be seen from the back where it crosses in the center and attaches on top to what must be the back of the choker. Beneath the waist, however, no details or decorations are added and no adornments from the front continue to the back.¹¹⁵

Mediterranean

The Molded 'Naked Goddess' Figurine is a unique mix of 6th century BCE Archaic Greek and Near Eastern conventions. Standing in strict frontality, the figurine dons a tall *polos* headdress decorated with incised patterns and punched dots. Flowing from underneath the *polos* are the stylized locks of the figurine's hair, represented in two rectangular shaped masses, which fall in front of her



Figure 15 Molded 'Naked Goddess' Figure
ca. 600 – 500 BCE (Archaic)
Gortyn, Crete
Terracotta
Archaeological Museum,
Heraklion
h. 16.9 cm

¹¹⁵ Bautze 620.

ears to rest on her chest. On her upper torso are her clearly indicated, moderate sized breasts.

Her upper arms are shown tight to the side of her body but unfortunately the rest of her arms have been broken off. Based on other 'Naked Goddess' examples, the arms would most likely have been affixed to rest on the side of her body, touch the breasts, or be placed on the lower part of the body.¹¹⁶ In this case, based on the pattern of the break, it does not appear that the arms were placed on the side of the body. Thus the arms could have been placed on the breast or have rested on the hips.

Most notably, the figurine is nude, leaving the breasts and pelvic area in view without the veil of even a diaphanous cloth. While the pelvic area is marked with incised lines, the artist did not make any indication of the figurine's naval. Soft modeling forms the legs of the figurine, which are rigidly conjoined in a complete upright position. Although there is significant wear on the bottom of the piece, incised lines representing the knees can still be seen. The wearing of the bottom also makes the feet impossible to view but they are likely placed with one slightly more forward than the other.

Analysis and Conclusions

The figurines in this section be easily be compared and shared influences determined as from the Greek side the figurine is part of a style called

¹¹⁶ Bohm Stephanie. *"The 'Naked Goddess' In Early Greek Art: An Orientalizing Theme par excellence". Sea routes : interconnections in the Mediterranean 16th - 6th c. BC : proceedings of the International Symposium held at Rethymnon, Crete in September 29th - October 2nd 2002*, Eds. Vassos Karageorghis, et al. Athens: University of Crete and the A. G. Leventis Foundation. 2003. 366.

Orientalizing that is known for its heavy and direct influence from the east. From the Indus side, however, obvious connections with the west are harder to find. This figurine was created during the transitional period of the Indus Civilization although for a style that is common in the ascent of the Mauryan Empire. The most notable connection between the two is the use of a mold. The Molded Naked Goddess is formed completely through the use of a mold, while the Indus figurine only uses a mold for the face. Nevertheless, the technique of molds is a clear adaptation from the Near East on both sides.

For the Molded 'Naked' Goddess, the most prominent feature of Near Eastern influence is the depiction of the figurine as nude. Although two of the three Aegean examples thus far have been portrayed as naked, the convention of depicting females as clothed began after the Cycladic figurines and with the rise of the Mycenaean civilization. Thus in these contexts, the return to an unclothed female figurine is a striking difference. However as a few of the Near Eastern figurines used in this catalog have shown, partial or complete nudity was common in the Near East. Excluding the Neolithic Indus figurine, the Harappan terracotta is partially nude on top while the lower body is covered with a girdle. Although this is harder to discern in the simplistic vessel figurine where there is no indication of either clothing or the pelvic region, the breasts are clearly indicated suggesting that in this case as well the figurine is partially nude. In the example from this section, the figurine is again definitely nude on top with the lower body covered either by anklets or, more likely, by a garment. In the Aegean the depiction of nudity lasts only for the short Orientalizing period of the 6th and 7th

centuries BCE. Afterwards the use of nudity does not reappear again until the period of Classical art three hundred years later.¹¹⁷ This difference in the tendency of the Greeks to depict the female figurines clothed versus that in the Indus to allow partial nudity is one that continues on until the end of the Greek Empire.

An interesting connection with the molded Indus figurine can also be made with the Cycladic idol from this exhibit (Figure 6). The fact that the Molded Indus figurine faces upwards, stands on pointed toes, and is only molded in the back from the waist up caused Bautze to hypothesize that these figurines may have been used in religious ceremonies where they were propped up on support less than 8 – 10 cm high, such as Mauryan baked brick.¹¹⁸ Thus when leaning on the brick, the figurine would appear to rest on its feet, face those participating in the ceremony, and be completely decorated from all around. This description of the position of the face and feet is reminiscent of that of the Cycladic idols, which also have pointed feet and upturned heads. This connection may reflect a similarity in both the representation of the figurines as a type of deity and the method in which they were used religiously.

¹¹⁷ Bohm 367.

¹¹⁸ Bautze 624.

Period 5: 500 BCE – 200 CE

Historical Contexts

South Asia

In 500 BCE in India, the small kingdoms of the Mahajanapadas were beginning to consolidate under the rule of stronger leaders. However while these political changes were occurring, many aspects of Indian culture were also being formulated and solidifying. *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*, the great Indian epics, were composed sometime around 400 BCE and were transmitted orally. These texts emulated the Hindu ideals according to which Indians were expected to conduct their lives. Their composition may have been in reaction to the immense growth of Buddhism and Jainism between 500 BCE and 400 BCE since they were both formed in reaction to the Vedic traditions. Also composed in 400 BCE was the religious Hindu texts the *Puranas* which were biographies of the gods Shiva and Vishnu.

The epics of *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* also highly influenced the production of art. The grandiose descriptions of ideal beauty in both epics were translated into canons of human depiction which continues into South Asian art today. Ideals such as eyes in the shape of lotus petals and breasts in the shape of mangoes can be clearly seen in sculpture from this time period. By using nature as the basis for the ideals of feminine beauty, the texts underlined the connection between women and nature in regard to the concept of fertility.

From 327 BCE to 326 BCE, the Macedonians, under Alexander the Great, arrived in India, where they had already taken control over the area in the

Northwest which had been under Persian leadership. This was the first time a western power was attempting to take control over India and the Indians fought back. After a taxing campaign, Alexander's own troops, weary by the years of invasions, rebelled against their leader, forcing the Macedonians to turn around. Fortunately for India, Alexander the Great died on the return to Greece, causing the Macedonians to leave India alone.

The northwestern province of Bactria embodies the extent of western influence. It was a province of the neighboring Seleucid empire until 250 BCE at which time it declared its independence under the Greek governor Diodotus.¹¹⁹ A region to the south of Bactria, Gandhara, which the Macedonians gained at the fall of the Persian Empire, did become a Greco-Indian entity. The region became an important stop on the trade route the Silk Road as well, making it an area with true intercultural influences. In 323 BCE, the Mahajanapadas, including Gandhara, were finally consolidated into the Mauryan Empire. The most important Mauryan Emperor was Asoka who in 260 BCE converted the entire empire into a Buddhist state. Along with this conversion Asoka sponsored the building of several Buddhist shrines, called stupas, across India. Despite the sophistication of Mauryan sculpture, human figurines generally persisted in the earlier style of molded faces and stamped, appliquéd decorations.¹²⁰

The Mauryan Empire fell in the early second century BCE and gave way to dynasties such as the Shunga dynasty, which took over the central Indian region of the Mauryan Dynasty. Although the Shunga Dynasty only lasted until

¹¹⁹ Vidya Dehejia. *Indian Art*. London: Phaidon, 1997. 82.

¹²⁰ Frederick Asher and Walter Spink. "Maurya Figural Sculpture Reconsidered." *Ars Orientalis* 19 (1989): 5.

75 BCE, there was a remarkable flourish in Buddhist art, evident in stupas at Sanchi and Barhut.¹²¹ The region of Bactria, which had been independent under the Greeks, was captured in 130 BCE by the Kushans, a nomadic tribe from South China. With no artistic tradition of its own, the Kushans adopted the Greek conventions present at Bactria. As the Kushan Dynasty extended into Northwestern India, it adopted Buddhism as well, creating a Hellenized style of art for its new religion. By the first century CE, the Kushan Dynasty extended from Varanasi to the Oxus River, bringing its new, Hellenized style of art with it.¹²²

Mediterranean

The fifth century is the period in Greece which most people think of when considering Ancient Greece. It is the time of an immense flourishing in many fields, especially art. Greece was still separated into many city-states which often had individual strengths in the burgeoning fields. However despite having similar if not identical culture and language, the city-states remained firmly distinct entities.

In the larger context of Europe and Asia, the Greek city-states were truly a miniscule dot compared to the great empires of the east. Cyrus the Great took over the Median Empire and formed the Achaemenid or Persian Empire by 550 BCE. Cyrus put the empire through a period of immense expansion, taking under its fold the Greek city-states on the Ionian coast as well. Under the third king,

¹²¹ Dehejia 431.

¹²² Dehejia 83.

Darius I, the empire reached its greatest expanse, making it the largest ancient empire.

In 499 BCE, the Ionian Greeks rebelled against the Persians, receiving help in their revolt from the other Greek city-states. Although they were crushed heavily by Darius I in 494 BCE, the Persians did not forget the involvement of city-states such as Athens and Eretria on the Ionian side. Darius had set his sights on subjugating Greece and began his campaign against the Greeks in 492 BCE. However in the miraculous Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, the Greeks, led by Athens, defeated the Persians and staved off Persian invasion.

The triumphant defeat of Persia instilled in the Greeks both pride and a sense of unity which had not existed before. However their ability to defend themselves would be tested once again by the son of Darius I, Xerxes I. In 480 BCE Xerxes returned to Greece, this time succeeding in invading much of Greece and sacking Athens, an event that would forever change Greek and especially Athenian history. However in 479 BCE, the Greeks rallied once again and forever defeated the Persian Empire.

The after effects of the Persian War would have a profound impact on both the culture of Greece and the perception of the east. The Athenians, now seeing themselves as the saviors of Greece, formed the Delian League with many of the other Greek city-states in order to maintain the navy, which had been instrumental in defeating the Persians, and be prepared for a Persian return. Although it became clear after some time that the Persian threat had been

eradicated, the Athenians maintained the Delian League, eventually using it to create what was, in effect, an Athenian Empire.

From a part of the tribute Athens received from the members of the Delian League, the Athenians rebuild the parts of Athens ruined by the Persians. This led to a huge state-sponsored program of building, particularly on the Acropolis, the sacred area of Athena atop a hill of rock. Antagonism against the Persians, however, let the Athenians and most of Greece to move away from the Oriental influences of the period before and towards a 'wholly Greek' approach to art. The ornate quality of sculptures with their multiple stylizations and patterns were given up in favor of a naturalistic approach to sculpture. Thus, beginning in 480 BCE, the Greeks entered the period of art known as the Classical Period.

The dominance of Athenians, however, was greatly contested by the other Greek city-states, Sparta and its ally Corinth in particular. The internal conflicts over the control of Greece led to the Peloponnesian Wars spanning 460 BCE to 404 BCE. The wars, however, even at their end, did not bring much change to the political layout of Greece nor did their end the tension between the city-states.

While much internal conflict continued between the city-states, another political power, the Macedonians, were gaining power. Although the Macedonians were similar to the Greeks in language and some aspects of culture, they were not considered entirely Greek. Under the reign of Macedonian King Phillip II, the Greek city-states came under Macedonian rule. The son of Phillip II, Alexander the Great, came into power in 356 BCE and led Macedonia in its

expansion across Europe, defeating the Persian Empire and entering India, a move which would forever solidify western contact with the eastern world.

Exhibition Objects

South Asian



Figure 16 Cauri Bearer
ca. 200 CE (Kushan)
Didarganj
Polished Sandstone
Patna Museum, Patna
h. 1.625 m

The Patna Cauri Bearer from the 2nd century CE is part of a group of nonspecific female figures which act as attendants to the gods and manifests the ideals of South Asian beauty. A delicate pointed crown rests on the top of her head and behind a knot of hair which hangs low on the center of the forehead. Expert sculpting is used to form the contours of the face, with its almond shaped eyes and small rounded chin. Large ornate earrings hang from either ear down to the figure's shoulders, where they blend with a beaded choker and longer double-stranded bead necklace. The heavy pendant pulls the strands of the necklaces between the breasts and settles just above the marked naval.

The large breasts with subtly incised nipples are meant to mimic the idealized form of

melons. The breasts, along with the slender waist and wide hips, create the hourglass shape considered to be the pinnacle of perfected beauty by the South Asians. Hanging low on the hips is the figure's thinly formed garment, *dhoti*, which allows the exact shape of the legs to be seen under the draped folds of the material. The garment culminates in a mass of pleated material which hangs from the center of the body to the feet. A beaded girdle, *mekhala*, wraps around the figure's waist to meet in the center underneath the mass of folds.¹²³ The curves and lines of the fabric are represented throughout the garment through thin, incised lines.

While the left arm is broken, the right features a large bangle, which occupies almost the entire forearm, and grasps the handle of a fly whisk, *cauri*. The right arm is bent upwards to show the figure as ready to use the fan to cool the gods as soon as she is called upon. Also held by the right arm is the trail of fabric from the dhoti which is slung through the crook of the arm and hangs down the side of the figure. The hem of the dhoti reaches right to the figure's ankles which are adorned with a heavy anklet each. The figure's beauty is enhanced by its polished finish, a characteristic technique in sandstone figures from the Patna area that dates to the Mauryan Period.¹²⁴

Mediterranean

The Leaning Aphrodite is a marvelous embodiment of Classical Greek sculpture. Donning a belted chiton and himation, which she gracefully holds up with her right hand, the figure gazes out at the viewer with a serene, naturalistic,

¹²³ Asher and Spink 1.

¹²⁴ Asher and Spink 2.

and idealized face. The precise oval eyes, straight nose, and archer's bow lips are done according to the Greek canon of perfect beauty. Piled on top of her head is a mass of curly hair with the separate strands and center part subtly modeled. On the back of the head the top of the himation acting as a hood can be seen. Peeking out from under her gathered up hair are her small, delicate ears.

The undulating collar of the chiton falls unevenly over the figure's shoulders, revealing an infinitesimal amount of smooth

skin underneath and causing a ripple of folds and contours to fall over Aphrodite's body. The diaphanous cloth clings to the shape of the

breasts underneath with the tiniest suggestion of the nipples. Hanging off the breasts and the sleeves of the chiton, the fabric is gathered with a belt into a mass of folds at the waist. The bottom of the himation, which she uses to shield her face, is swung across her hips to hang over her left forearm and effectively hides from view her pelvic area, which surely would be otherwise visible through the gossamer cloth of the chiton. The bottom of the chiton clings to Aphrodite's legs, revealing a suggestion of the knee on the right leg and the full underlying shape of



Figure 17 Leaning Aphrodite
ca. 450 – 400 BCE (Classical)
Greece
Marble
Staatliche Museum zu Berlin
h. ~ 1.45 m

the relaxed left leg. The hem of the chiton just grazes the tops of her sandal-clad feet with the left leg placed slightly more forward than the right.

The bend in the left knee along with the slightly raised left hip, hard to see under the himation, and shoulder is one of the archetypal conventions of Classical Greek art, contrapposto, which allows the figure to appear in a natural relaxed pose. Aphrodite holds a plate in her left hand and with her left arms rests on a caryatid, a column on which the shaft is sculpted into the form of a human figure, often a female as it is in this case. Also classically modeled with an emphasis on the folds of her drapery, she wears a different garment than Aphrodite of a slightly older style.

Analysis and Conclusions

By the start of this period, there is undeniable proof of contact between the Greeks and the South Asians. In South Asia, the artistic trends for human figurines are initially slow to change. By the Shunga period, figurines with molded faces are converted into fully molded plaques.¹²⁵ Although the main stylistic conventions remain the same, there are slight changes with fuller facial features, a slight increase in naturalism, and a greater emphasis on detailed clothes and ornaments.¹²⁶ However by the time of the Sanchi Stupa, constructed around 50 – 25 BCE, female figures are carved in brackets in the round and are

¹²⁵ Coomaraswamy 14.

¹²⁶ Brooklyn Museum. Dept. of Oriental Art. and Amy G. Poster . *Figures In Clay: Terracottas from Ancient India*. Brooklyn, N.Y., 1973.23.

considerably curvaceous, with exaggerated features of large breasts and narrow waists.¹²⁷

The presence of female figures on the Sanchi stupa solidifies their religious significance. However they are not specific goddesses but are sacred simply due to their perfected, female form. The ideals of beauty which would be codified in the Gupta Period in the 4th through 6th centuries BCE are already evident in these figures. The basis for these ideals comes from nature, such as the chin, which should mimic a mango stone, or the lips, which should resemble a lotus blossom, and the breasts, which should be round as melons.¹²⁸ Thus women in their association with nature become auspicious figures representing fertility, abundance, and prosperity.¹²⁹ As sacred figures and in further pursuit of idealized beauty, the female figures are often shown with excessive and specific ornamentation. Although this has been a feature of South Asian art for many years, its necessary inclusion in sacred female figures gives it a religious significance as well.

The Kushans, with their mix of Greek and Persian artistic traditions from Bactria, brought life-sized in the round sculpture, like the Didarganj Cauri Bearer, with them to the rest of their Dynasty. Like the female bracket figures on the Sanchi stupa, these life-size female figurines were auspicious due to their female form. In the case of the Didarganj Cauri Bearer, she is also a celestial attendant. The female idealization of beauty present in the Sanchi stupa is still present in the

¹²⁷ Dehejia 64.

¹²⁸ Edith W. Watts. *The Art of South and Southeast Asia : A Resource for Educators*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001. 24.

¹²⁹ Dehejia 65.

Didarganj Cauri Bearer, as are the adornments. However although it retains these aspects of earlier South Asian art, the Didarganj Cauri Bearer betrays Grecian influence in its naturalistic appearance. The adornments, even though their presence represents South Asian custom, are carved realistically. The necklace is carved with rounded beads and is shown hanging through the breast, as a necklace of its weight would fall on a real female. The *dhoti* in particular shows Grecian tradition. The folds and pleats of the fabric are draped around the figure's body, pulling and hanging realistically. Even the diaphanous quality of the material, which reveals the shape of the body underneath, is from Greek tradition. Despite adopting the convention of depicting naturalistic drapery from much earlier Greek art, the *dhoti* still is somewhat stylized, underlining the continued trend of mixing Grecian artistic conventions with the established South Asia artistic heritage.

In Greece, the reaction to Persia led to a conscious abandonment of Persian artistic conventions. The stylization seen in the Gortyn "Naked" Goddess of the Orientalizing Period was eschewed for naturalism. The Greeks believed that humans were the embodiment of perfection and thus intensely studied the human body in order to create a canon for ideal human representation. The Greeks worked to correctly depict human anatomy, such as how the shift of weight onto a single leg affects the rest of the body. Thus for females as well as males, guidelines were developed for everything from the ideal height to the ideal shape of the nose.

The Greeks also applied naturalism to the clothing donned by the figures. The many folds and pleats of Greek clothes lent themselves perfectly to this

movement, allowing the Greeks to carefully depict the exact fall and drapes of the material as it conforms to the figure's body underneath. Like the South Asian female figures, these female figures of idealized beauty were auspicious by virtue of their perfection. However unlike South Asia, the figures are used to represent specific divinities. The same concept of perfection belonging to the divine exists, however the sacred quality of the Greek figures is almost exclusively saved for gods of the Greek pantheon.

Although the Greeks were forerunners in naturalistic art and succeeded in creating a distinctively Greek style of art, the subject of this figure, Aphrodite, is the result of earlier cultural diffusion. In Greek mythology, the goddess Aphrodite is born as a full adult from the sea and arrived on the island of Cyprus. She is the goddess of love and beauty and her consort, Ares, is the god of war. However the origin of the Aphrodite comes from the east and has origins from as early as the fourth millennium BCE with the Sumerian goddess Inanna.

As Mesopotamia grew and developed, Inanna was given the Akkadian name of Eshtar and then the Old Babylonian name of Ishtar. In the second millennium BCE, the Ishtar cult spread from Mesopotamia to Canaan, Syria, Palestine, Phoenicia, and Arabia, where she also acquired the names Ashtar and Astarte.¹³⁰ With the name of Ashtar and Astarte, the goddess reached Cyprus around 1200 BCE. Eventually, Astarte arrived in Greece and was transformed into the Goddess Aphrodite, maintaining from the Akkadian Ishtar the attributes of carnal love and fertility. Ishtar also accompanied her consort to battles,

¹³⁰ Marcovich 45.

underlying both goddesses' association with war.¹³¹ Thus, although the Greeks eschewed eastern influence and were able to formulate a unique artistic style, they were unable to eradicate the earlier effects of cultural diffusion which, by this point, had become an established part of Greek culture.

Conclusion

Although many of the analyses and theories suggested in this exhibit require further research, they do at least make the theory of cultural diffusion between the Mediterranean and South Asia a distinct possibility. Many of the artworks in this exhibit indicate at least one feature that is the product of foreign influences, whether from the Near East or farther. That these features can vary from utilitarian, artistic, or religious similarities is evidence that cultural diffusion was pervasive.

In the Neolithic era, the determination of ancient people to move beyond their boundaries was already evident by the movement of ideas in their respective regions. This is especially impressive in the Aegean, where communication between the Greek mainland, Crete, and the Cycladic Islands required the technology for sea travel.

By the third millennium BCE, the people of both the Aegean and South Asia had already begun substantial contact with the Near East. This early contact with the Near East was vital to the movement of ideas between South Asia and the Mediterranean. As the Near East spanned most of the area between the South

¹³¹ Marcovich 46.

Asia and the Mediterranean, it acted as a conduit through which goods and ideas could pass from South Asia and vice versa.

The break in civilization that occurred both in South Asia and the Mediterranean during the second millennium BCE significantly stunted the cultural diffusion that had been burgeoning in the previous millennium. Despite the lull in fresh influences, the influences which had already pervaded the regions continued in artistic conventions and in religious ideas, as seen with the creation of the Aphrodite cult.

The revival of artistic traditions that accompanied increased political stability occurred earlier in the Mediterranean than in South Asia. By the first millennium BCE, the confluence of eastern and western artistic traditions is undeniable and reflects the formation of direct communication between the Mediterranean and South Asia.

There are two trends in cultural diffusion that are evident specifically from the consideration of female figurines. Both regions, even during times defined by their foreign influences, the Archaic Period Orientalizing style for the Greeks and the Gandhara art for the South Asians, there is a consistent tendency to blend foreign artistic conventions with the native artistic heritage. The second trend is that, regardless of the lack of foreign influences, either through purposeful avoidance as in Classical Greece or because of the loss of foreign contacts as in Post-Indus South Asia, foreign influences from much earlier works of art were still present, having become accepted aspects of their new cultures. Thus Greek

and South Asian people could never escape foreign influences but eschewed any form of direct replication.

This exhibit was created in reaction to two modern issues – the belief that eastern and western cultures are invariably distinct and the belief that our ancient ancestors were confined to small regions where they were oblivious to outside cultures. The conclusions in this catalog prove that both the early cultures of the east (South Asia) and the west (cultures stemming from Greek and Roman traditions) borrowed heavily from one another in all aspects of culture and society from writing to religion. The evidence of expansive travel as early as the Neolithic Era completely debunks the image of small, distant villages that were difficult to access. Although the full extent of interconnectivity is as yet undetermined, it is clear that the ancient world was an undeniably intercultural world.

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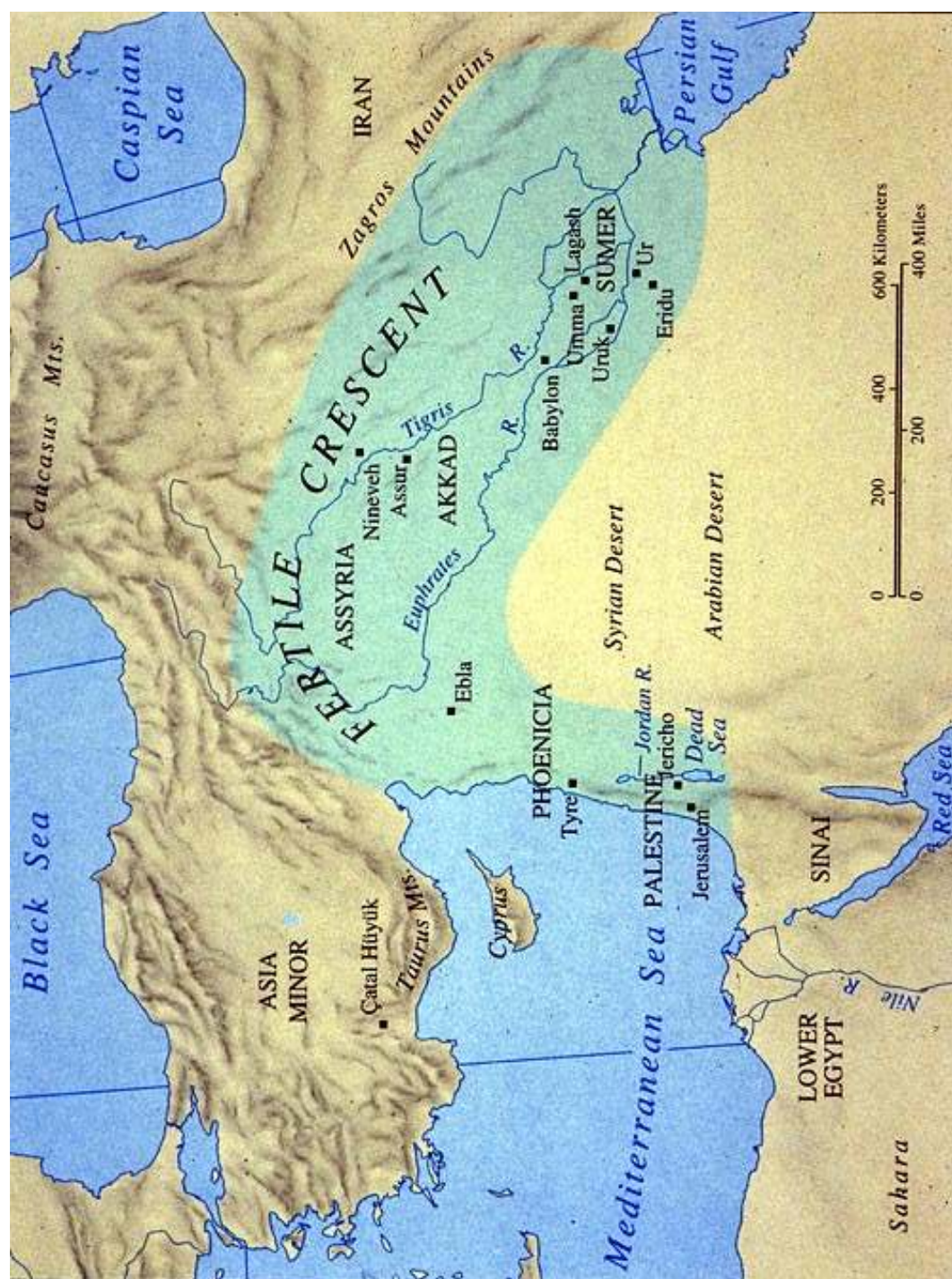
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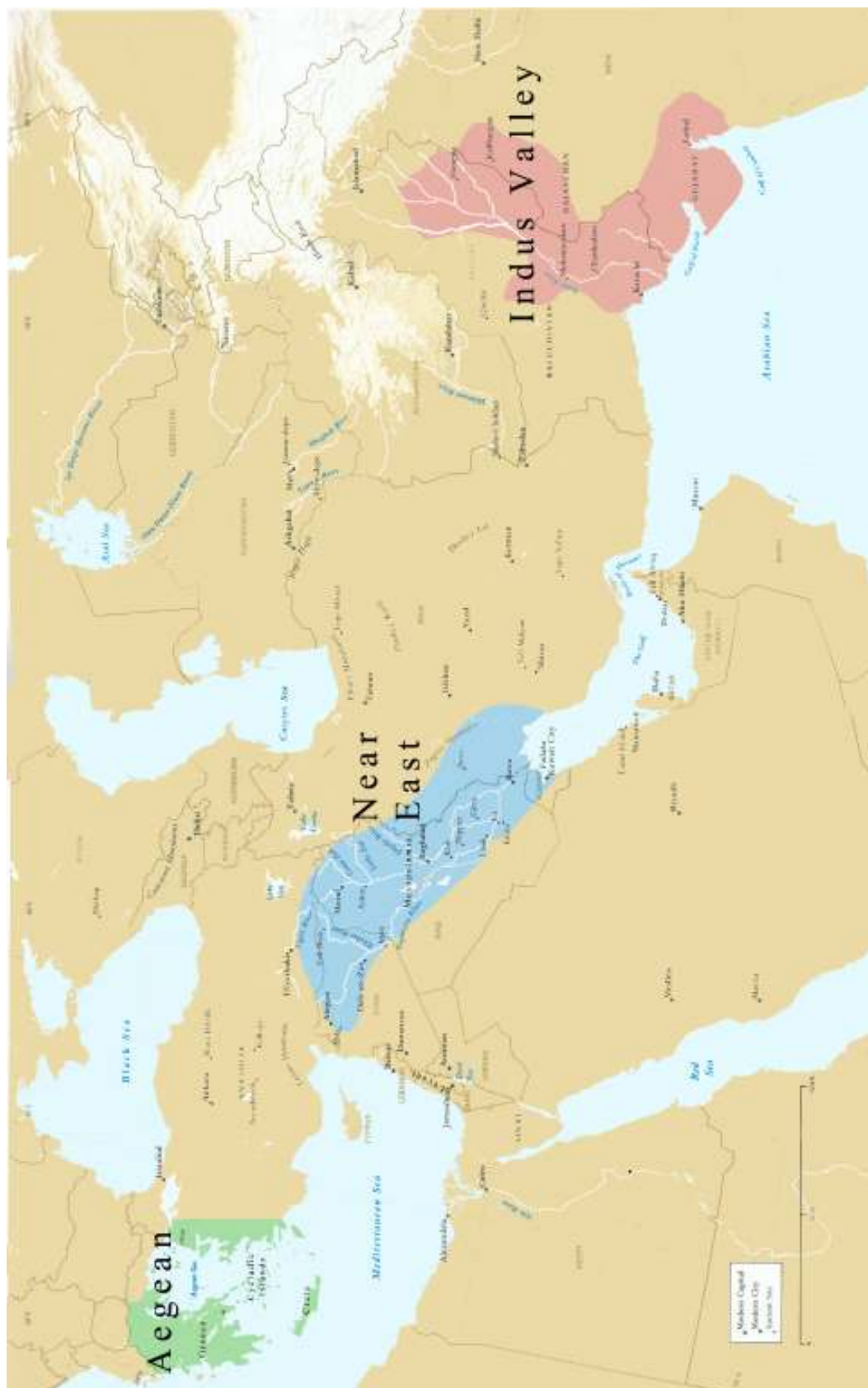
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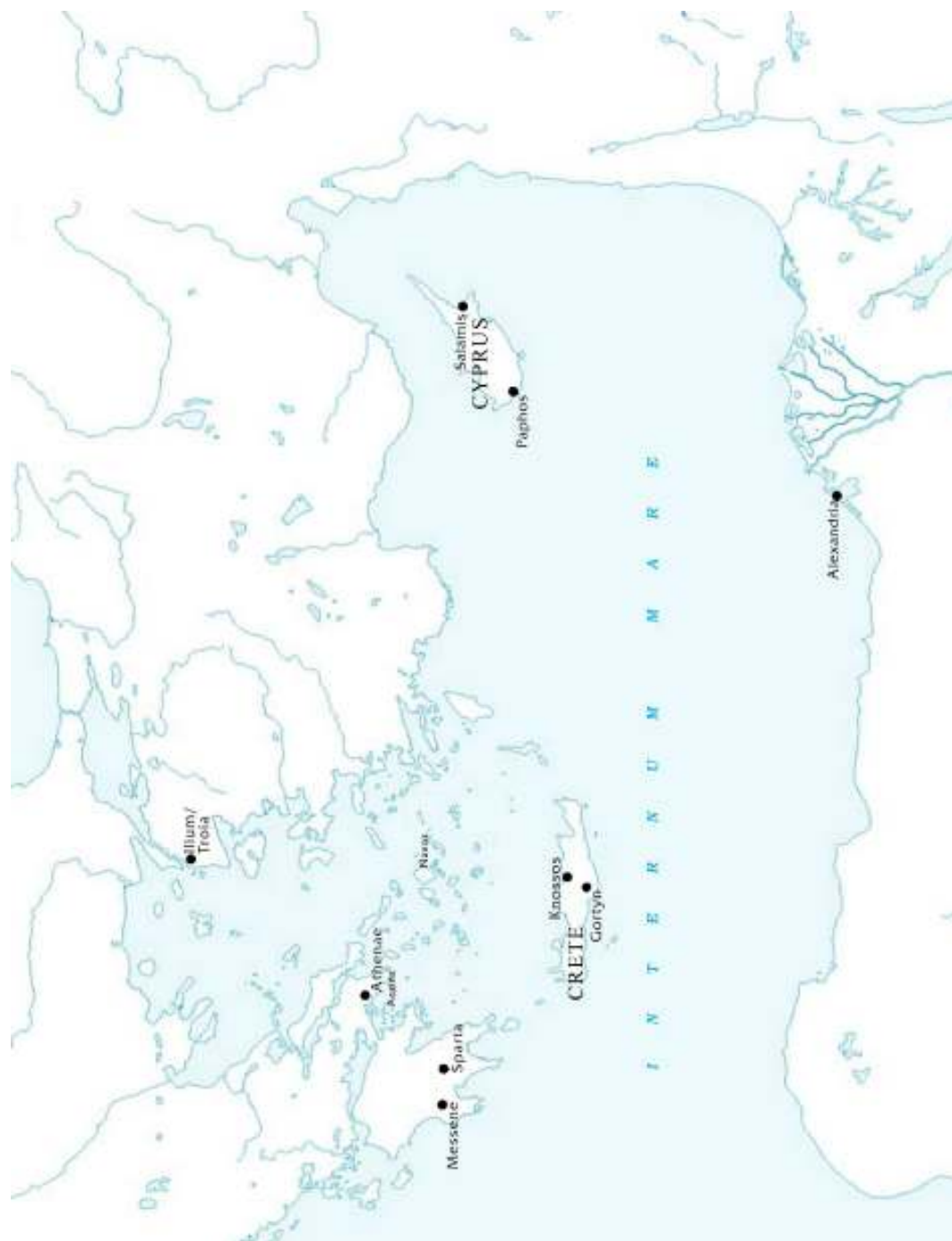
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Map 1 Mesopotamia at Height of Akkadian Empire



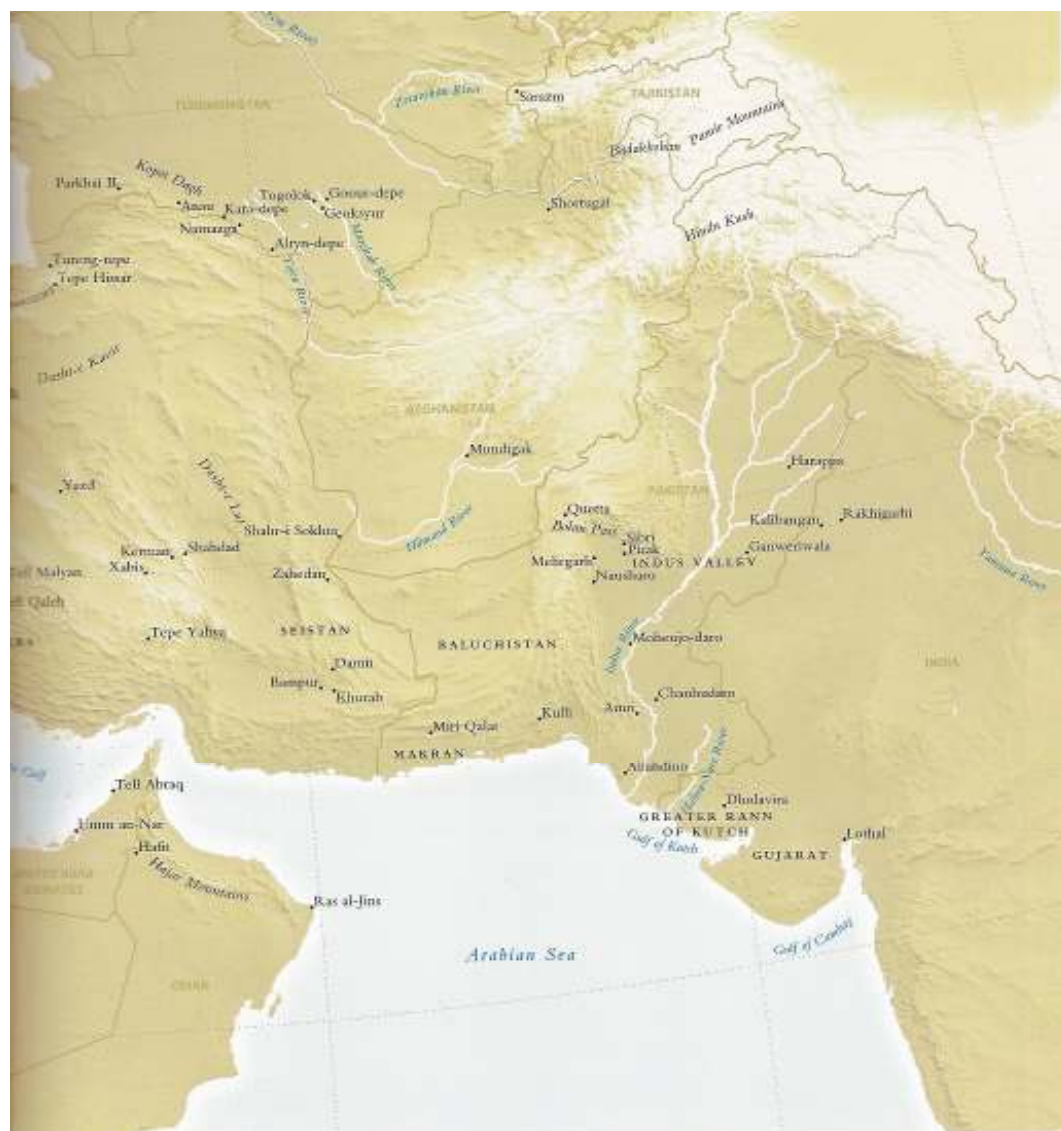
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Map 3 Major Aegean Sites



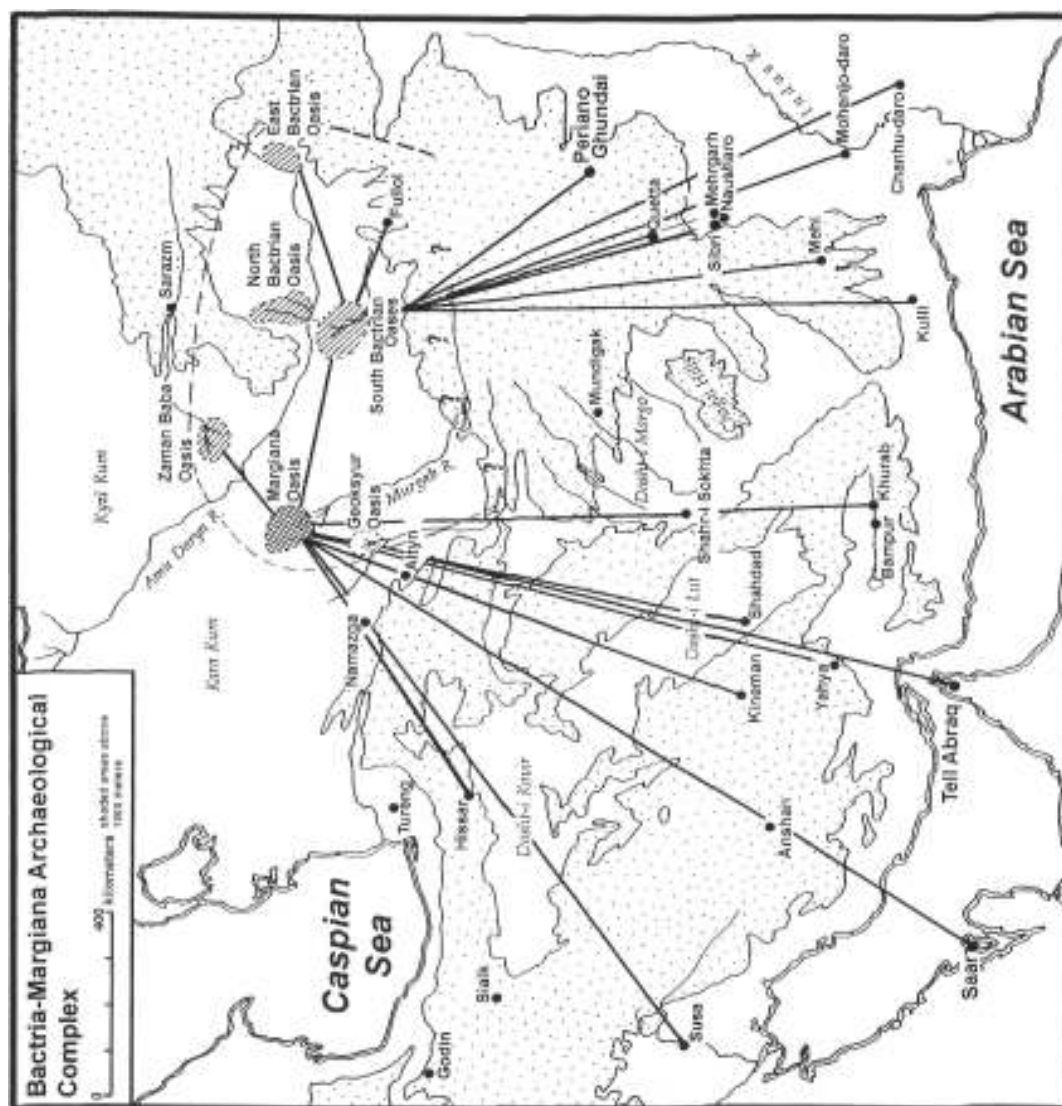
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Map 7 Middle Asian Interaction Sphere



Map 8 Spread of Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex Artifacts



Map 11 Locations of Intercultural Style Motifs

























¹ **Error! Reference source not found.**

Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York,N.Y.) 382.

² **Error! Reference source not found.** Figurine Side view

Ibid.

³ Figure 2 Cycladic Neolithic Female

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⁴ Figure 5 Female Figurine with Flower Headdress

Aruz, Wallenfels, and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York,N.Y.) 391.

⁵ Figure 6 Cycladic Female Figurine

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⁶ Figure 11 Female Vessel-Shaped Figurine

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⁷ Figure 12 Tau Figurine

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⁸ Figure 13 Terracotta Alabastron

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⁹ Figure 14 Molded Female Figurine with Headdress

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¹⁰ Figure 15 Molded 'Naked Goddess' Figure

Rebecca Miller Ammerman. "The Naked Standing Goddess: A Group of Archaic Terracotta Figurines from Paestum." *American Journal of Archaeology* 95.2 (1991): pp. 203-230

¹¹ Figure 16 Cauri Bearer

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¹² Figure 17 Leaning Aphrodite

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Capstone Summary

The purpose of this project is to create an exhibit which explores the communication networks between the ancient cultures of the Mediterranean and South Asia and how these networks affected the artwork of the two areas. The benefit of analyzing this topic through an exhibition rather than with a typical research paper is that exhibitions are by definition geared towards a general public audience rather than a narrow scholarly community. Thus the material needs to be presented in language that is accessible to the public and also include any periphery information that is necessary for understanding the overall meaning of the piece within its wider cultural contexts. Since it was not possible to present the actual pieces in an exhibit, the project is a fictional exhibit with a virtual rendering of how the exhibition would be presented and an accompanying catalog.

Since the aim of the exhibit is to discover the influence of cross-cultural communications on art, the exhibit is split into five time periods, from the Neolithic Period to the Early Classical Period, so any trends from cultural diffusion can be fully understood. The exhibit concentrates on the representation of females in particular because some of the earliest works found from both ancient civilizations are figurines of females. By looking at objects of the same subject matter, a clearer comparison of art styles from both cultures is possible.

With the exception of Period 3, in which a later figurine is also included to demonstrate the possible result of the primary pieces, there is one female figurine from each region per time period. The artworks included in the exhibit were

chosen from artwork present in ARTstor, an online database for images of artworks from numerous collections, as well as figurines mentioned in articles pertaining to the scope of the exhibit, resulting in eleven artworks. The works of art included were chosen based on the extent to which they exemplified diffusion in the realms of artistic conventions, religion, and practical use with the Near East and each other.

The written component of the final product is exhibition the catalog, a publication which provides didactic material beyond the labels and expounds on the theme of the exhibit. As the catalog is meant to give the public a comprehensive explanation of the artworks in the exhibition, it includes sections on the trade and communication and the role of women. Contact between regions usually stems from the creation of systems of trade. Thus these trade networks are the conduits for the ideas which bring about cultural diffusion.

The Trade and Communication section explores the trade of the Mediterranean and South Asia with each other and the lands in between them. It also looks at media other than female figures which suggest cultural diffusion. Since all the artworks in the exhibit are of females, an understanding of how women were perceived in these regions is necessary to fully grasp the meaning of the figures. Although there is little information about women from ancient civilizations, the little that is known and some of the issues of making conclusions about ancient women is explained in the Role of Women section.

The next five sections are of the exhibition artworks. Each section includes a brief summary of the historical events that were occurring at the time

each artworks was being constructed. This gives the public a context in which to place the artwork as well as a grasp of the political and economical situations of the time period which might have affected the production of the artwork. Each artwork is then examined individually and then in relation to one another. The analysis of connections between the figurines are based on visual analysis and research into each figure's function and significance. The entire catalog concludes with a summary.

The second component of this project is the exhibition design, a 3D model of how the exhibition would be set up in a gallery space. The gallery design for this exhibit was created using the program Google Sketch-up. This is a free program that allows for the creation of 3D models of anything using a variety of building materials. The program does have some limitations such as the inability to incorporate a lighting design. Thus, although all the artworks would be lit individually to draw attention to them and provide them with proper lighting in contrast to the darker gallery area, this could not be implemented in the design.

Since sea travel was an integral part of the communication that occurred in ancient civilizations, I chose a dark blue color for the walls and podia to make the visitor feel as though he or she is encompassed by the sea. The gallery space is a single rectangle with a central dividing wall and a floating perpendicular wall which marks the entrance of the exhibit. Thus the visitor would encounter the floating wall and move to the opening to the right to reach the beginning of the exhibit. Once inside, there is only one direction for the visitor to move,

guaranteeing that the visitors moves through the exhibit in the intended manner and exit at the left opening of the floating wall.

The first area of the exhibit shows detailed maps of the area being considered and a map showing the exact location of each piece in the exhibit. The podia are arranged in the space so that the visitor has enough room to walk around the sculpture. The works from each period are grouped so that their connection is clearly distinguishable but with enough space in between to facilitate a few people to stand comfortably at each work. The exhibition design attempts to create an atmosphere, flow, and spaciousness conducive to an optimal visitor experience.

The importance of this exhibit, as with any exhibit, is that it makes highly technical or specialized research conducted by scholars accessible to a general public. This exhibit in particular explores an area which is at the beginning stages of academic scholarship. Even though it cannot provide definitive conclusions to the existence of diffusion between regions as far away as the Mediterranean and South Asia, it can at least serve to make the public look at the issue in a new light and question their established opinions of the issue.

In particular, this exhibit looks to challenge two modern beliefs – that the cultures of the east, in particular South Asia, and the cultures of the west, the societies based on Greek and Roman traditions, are fundamentally distinct and that the people of ancient civilizations lived in isolated areas with little or no knowledge of foreign cultures and civilizations. Thus, by examining the patterns of trade in ancient civilizations and the cultural diffusion that resulted from this

trade, this exhibit casts a new light on widely-believed ideas about the ancient world and brings it to the public.